The mystery of music- linking mind, body, and spirit

What is it about music anyway? I’ve seen an elderly loved one with dementia sing complete songs on pitch, and with emotion, even though she can rarely put a whole sentence together when she’s not singing. I’ve seen a group of tired choir members arriving for an evening practice leave an hour later energized and animated—simply because they spent an hour together working on a Christmas cantata. The power of music is both mysterious and undeniable. Since it has been part of every culture ever studied, it seems that God hard-wired a love for music into us at creation. But why? Some important brain chemicals may provide a clue.

Dopamine is linked to numerous functions in the brain. Two of its most important are reward/pleasure sensation, and memory formation. Not surprisingly, listening to music causes a huge release of dopamine in the brain. Could that explain why we remember verses put to song better than verses simply learned through rote memory? But dopamine isn’t the only music-loving hormone we have. Oxytocin is a hormone related to social bonding, and of course the health benefits associated with strong relationships have been known for centuries.

Researchers tell us that singing with others (my adult choir!) dumps oxytocin into the brain. The result? Enhanced feelings of trust, acceptance, and love. But here’s something almost too good to be true. Oxytocin also dampens the release of cortisol—the primary stress hormone that can have devastating health effects if levels are elevated for long periods of time.

It’s the holiday season- a perfect time to benefit from God’s engineering brilliance. With everything we know about the health benefits of music, perhaps our greeting on campus over the next several weeks ought to be, 

*Do you hear what I hear?*

January Wellness Workshop - *Depression: More than just the blues*

*Thursday, January 12, 12:00-12:45 PM – Parmer Cinema*  
*Presenter: Eleanor Muir, Director of Counseling and Health Services*  
*Mark your calendar today, so you don’t miss this important workshop!*

**EMPOWER Wellness Program**

EMPOWER is an on-site weight management program that enables participants to move forward in meeting personal goals, by providing helpful knowledge and creating a community of support.

Through eight weekly meetings, interactive engagement with a Senior Health Coach, and individual sharing, participants are guided into a lifetime of weight management success. We are offering the 8-week program on Thursdays from 12:30-1:30 PM, beginning January 19. We must have at least 15 employees register for us to be able to offer this program. So find a friend and sign up today. But please, only register if you are able to attend at least 6 of the 8 sessions. Employees can register simply by emailing Doug Miller at dmill@messiah.edu. Deadline for registrations is January 3, 2017.
MESSIAH EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

December, 2016

February Wellness Workshop
Snacks and Salad Demonstration – Wed. Feb. 22, 4:30-5:15 PM
Eating snacks and salads are quick and easy ways to add nutrient rich fruits and vegetables to your day. SPACE IS LIMITED, SO RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY BY EMAILING DOUG MILLER - dmiller@messiah.edu.

Sources:

Holiday Tip 1
Stick to 100% juice.
Many juices and fruit cocktail drinks contain added sugar or sweeteners. Make sure the label reads 100% fruit juice. Or, better yet, eat the actual fruit, which is not processed and contains beneficial fiber. For lower calorie options, mix seltzer water with a splash of 100% juice or infuse water with fruit for a kick of flavor.

Holiday Tip 2
Choose low-fat substitutes.
Coffee drinks are surprisingly high in fat, sugar, and calories. When drinking coffee or cocoa, use low-fat or fat-free milk. Instead of sugary flavored syrups, try adding spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, powdered vanilla, or unsweetened cocoa powder.

Holiday Tip 3
Limit yourself to favorites.
People tend to eat more and consume more calories when they sample a variety of foods. At holiday gatherings and parties, limit yourself to only your favorites, instead of a little bit of everything, to keep from overeating. Also be sure to drink plenty of water, as dehydration is often confused as hunger.

For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given...
~ Isaiah 9:6