

DRUM UP A GOOD MOOD

Getting In touch with your inner Ricky Ricardo or Ringo Starr may help protect against burnout and boost your spirits, suggest recent studies. If you beat bongos, bang, a drum or even tap a tambourine with other people, that is.

After completing six hour-long weekly communal drumming sessions, nonmusical participants in one study showed a 46 percent improvement in mood says neurologist and study leader Barry Bittman, MD, director of the Mind-Body Wellness Center in Meadville, Pa. People experienced a significant decrease in tension, anxiety and depression - and their spirits continued to improve even six weeks after the sessions ended. In another study, after just one session, lab tests revealed that drummers had increased the activity of cells within the bloodstream that naturally attack viruses and cancer, a sign of greater immunity.

“Drumming reduced emotional and physiological aspects of stress, says, Dr.Bittman. To reap similar benefits, you'd need to attend a drumming circle with a trained facilitator, including ice-breaking exercises with maracas, expressing feelings via drumbeats and discussing them with the group, and drumming together to various tempos and guided imagery.

But drumming at home with friends and family to favorite tunes will likely help tame tension and give you a sense of inner peace if you let yourself have fun making music and play without worrying about your performance, explains Dr. Bittman. “We are rhythmical organisms, from our heartbeats to our breathing. When we create rhythms, it resonates with our bodies.” It may be the camaraderie of the group and the energizing power of creative expression and music that is responsible for the stress-and burnout-reducing benefits of communal drumming, he speculates.

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