

Have you ever wondered in which ways music affects our moods?

Good music has direct access to the emotions. As such it's a fantastic tool for fine-tuning our moods. Saarikallio and Erkkila (2007) *investigated the ways people use music to control and improve their mood* by interviewing eight adolescents from Finland. The participants may be a small, very specific group, but they actually present a really useful list:



1. **Entertainment** – At the most fundamental level music provides stimulation. It lifts the mood before going out, it passes the time while doing the washing up, it accompanies travelling, reading and surfing the web.
2. **Revival** – Music revitalises in the morning and calms in the evening.
3. **Strong sensation** – Music can provide deep, thrilling emotional experiences, particularly while performing.
4. **Diversion** – Music distracts the mind from unpleasant thoughts which can easily fill the silence.
5. **Discharge** – Music matching deep moods can purge and cleanse.
6. **Mental work** – Music encourages daydreaming, sliding into old memories, and exploring the past.



7. **Solace** – Shared emotion, shared experience, a connection to someone lost.



These seven strategies all aim for two goals: controlling and improving mood. One of the beauties of music is it can accomplish more than one goal at a time. Uplifting music can both divert, entertain and revive. Sad, soulful music can provide solace, encourage mental work and discharge emotions. The examples

are endless.

Many of Saarikallio and Erkkilä's findings chime with previous research. For example, distraction is considered one of the most effective strategies for regulating mood. Music has also been strongly connected with thinking states. These tend to allow us greater understanding of our emotions.

One of the few negative connections Saarikallio and Erkkilä consider is that sad music might promote rumination. Rumination is the constant examination of emotional state which, ironically, can lead to less clarity. On the contrary, however, Saarikallio and Erkkilä found that music increased the understanding of feelings, an effect not associated with rumination.

(Adapted from <http://www.spring.org.uk/>. Downloaded 25 February 2014)