



Tune in to Emotional Wellbeing

Introduction

As an individual working with young people in Hong Kong, you are likely familiar with the mental health challenges faced by adolescents and young adults. Studies show that depression, anxiety, and loneliness are all too common among this population.¹⁻³ The good news is there are effective strategies to help young people better manage their emotions and improve well-being - and music can play a pivotal role.

The importance of Emotion Regulation

Emotions play a huge role in young people's mental health. Studies show that many young persons in Hong Kong struggle with problems like depression, anxiety, and loneliness - some as high as 47% during the pandemic.⁴ These negative feelings can lead to unhealthy behaviors like substance use, often because young people lack good ways to manage their emotions.⁵ However, being able to regulate emotions has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety in this age group.⁶

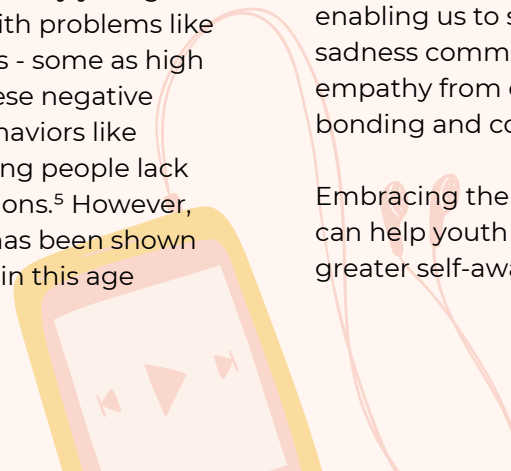
Understanding Emotions

Emotions are complex psychological experiences that involve cognitive, physiological, and behavioural components. According to Russell's circumplex model of emotion, emotions can be represented on a two-dimensional circular space, with the horizontal axis representing the degree of pleasantness and the vertical axis representing the degree of arousal.⁷

Adaptive Functions of Emotions

Recognizing the adaptive roles of emotions empowers young people to view their emotional experiences as valuable sources of information and guidance, rather than something to suppress. For instance, anger motivates us to address threats or injustices, enabling us to stand up for our needs. While sadness communicates a need for support and empathy from others, facilitating social bonding and connection.

Embracing the adaptive functions of emotions can help youth navigate life's challenges with greater self-awareness and resilience.



The Power of Music for Emotions



Numerous studies show that music can be a powerful tool for managing emotions.⁸⁻¹² Listening to music has been shown to reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, while also helping people feel more connected to others, especially when shared.

Music has been particularly helpful in addressing loneliness, a big issue for many young people in Hong Kong. Something as simple as listening to familiar, personal music can have a comforting, soothing effect - almost like having a supportive friend to listen. This can make up for the lack of deep connections that lonely young people sometimes experience.

Music can be a comprehensive way to promote healthy emotion skills overall. We can empower Hong Kong's youth to develop effective coping strategies and improve their overall well-being.



Tips for Using Music to Manage Emotions

When working with young people, it's important to provide them with healthy coping strategies for managing their emotions. Here are some tips for integrating music into emotional wellness:

Identify Emotions

Start by helping young people become more aware of the emotions they commonly experience, whether it's stress, anxiety, sadness, or even happiness. This self-awareness is the first step.

Match Music to Emotions

Encourage young people to think about the types of music that tend to elicit or soothe each emotion. For example, upbeat, energetic music may help boost their mood when they're feeling down, while calming, ambient music can help them relax when they're stressed.

Experiment with Genres

Don't limit them to one genre. Suggest they explore different styles of music, from classical and instrumental to pop and rock. Everyone responds to music differently, so finding what works best for them is key.

Curate a Music Library

Help them build a diverse collection of songs they can turn to for different emotional needs. Assist them in creating playlists for various moods, such as "Anxiety Relief," "Mood Booster," or "Relaxation Station."

Use Music Purposefully

When they're feeling a certain way, have them intentionally select music that can help shift their emotional state. Encourage them to pay attention to how the music makes them feel in the moment.

Reflect on Emotional Shifts


After listening to music, have them reflect on how their emotions have shifted. Does it make them feel better?


Let's Start Today!

By equipping young people with essential emotional management skills, we can empower them to navigate life's challenges with greater resilience, now and in the future. Together, we can foster a generation better prepared to handle life's ups and downs.

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