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Yogi times

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All One Music

Special Guest Interview

Krishna Das - Music and Unity

10 Health Benefits of
Drumming

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the pulse of life

by christine stevens

10 ways that drumming will keep you healthy

There is a rhythm, a pulse as old as humanity. Like an old oak tree, the archetypal roots of rhythm reach deep into many cultures all over the planet. The ancestors drummed for spirituality and health, healing and prayer, ceremonies and celebrations.

There is a rhythm, a rhythm of wellness in body, mind and spirit. Today's growing movement of conscious living calls us to take an active role in our own health and wellbeing. We seek a greater level of living, filled with health, connecting to Spirit, living our passion and accessing JOY!

There is a rhythm that has always existed within you. It may have been buried, silenced, gotten rusty or dusty, but nonetheless, it beats within you. From the beat of walking to the inhale and exhale of each breath—you've been drumming your whole life.

You are the drum of your heart.

What is a drum circle

From Toyota corporate headquarters in Torrance, to Kaiser Permanente in Richmond, California, the rhythm that draws hundreds of people to play drums together in parks

hand drums and world percussion instruments are used to create magic, community, and rhythm.

on Sundays in Venice Beach or in Golden Gate Park is now captivating participants in yoga studios, spiritual retreats, corporations and medical centers. The reasons are simple. Drumming is powerful, playful, primal and has healing potential.

According to Arthur Hull, "the drum circle is not a drum class or a performance. It is open to all levels of playing and empowers participants to discover their own rhythm and share it with the circle." Hand drums and world percussion instruments are used to create magic, community and rhythm.

Top Ten Benefits

Researchers in the field of Integrative Medicine are finding evidence to support key health benefits of drumming. In studies testing people who had never drummed before, results confirm the philosophy of the ancients: the drum is a tool for expression, creativity and healing.

1. Beat Stress.

No pun intended, a ground-breaking study published in 2001 by Barry Bittman, M.D., showed that one hour of group drumming, according to a specific protocol, increased Natural Killer (NK) cells, a key marker of immune function necessary to fight stress.

Another study demonstrated reduced employee burnout by offering the one hour drumming program for six weeks.

2. Exercise.

The physical act of drumming requires the use of upper body strength and coordination. There is a low perceived effort for high results because it is fun and engaging. Time flies when you're having fun...on the drum.

3. Spirituality

Drumming connects people to a power greater than themselves. From Japanese Shinto practices to Native American ceremonies, many spiritual traditions drum for prayer, gratitude and calling upon the Divine.

4. Joy

The first thing people notice in a drum circle is that everyone is smiling. A study in 2004 demonstrated that a six-week drumming program called HealthRHYTHMS created a 42% improvement in mood of stressed-out employees, including increased vitality and decreased anxiety.

5. Creativity

Songwriter and singing voice of Snow White, Melissa Disney, uses drumming to unleash her creativity. Drum circles are spontane-

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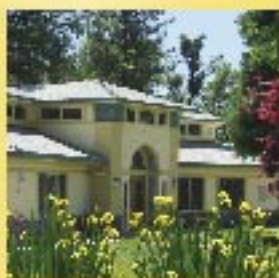
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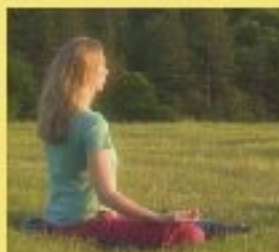
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ous and bring out the creativity within every person, which can then be transferred into creative projects, life and work.

6. Self-expression

Drumming taps into a power to communicate beyond words. According to author Dr. Bernie Siegel, M.D., "Every group drumming experience I've participated in with EcaP (Exceptional Cancer Patients) brings to the surface remarkably deep, heartfelt, healing emotions that are difficult to express with words alone."

7. Energy

Skye Alexander's The Care and Feeding of Your Chi recommends drumming to break down energy blockages, release tension and improve your mood. "The physical act and sound of drumming makes for a truly holistic and energizing experience."

8. Making Music

Although 99% of the population report that they love music, only 8% of Americans over the age of 18 play a musical instrument. Through drumming, people who have never played an instrument before discover the natural ease of feeling and expressing the rhythm. As Wayne Dyer says, "don't die with the music inside you."

9. Be in the NOW

Drumming gets people out of their heads and into their hearts, out of the past or future and into the present moment. According to Eckhart Tolle, being in the "now" is the key to enlightenment. So, drum your way to the moment and a sense of being fully present, awake and alive!

10. Unity

The drum circle is a metaphor of connection and community. People enjoy a powerful sense of belonging as they come together in the rhythm.

Get Your Groove On

In just three steps, you can start incorporating drumming into your life:

1. Get a drum - The most popular drums today fall into two main categories: buffalo or frame drums and cone drums, which include goblet shaped

drums like African djembe and Egyptian doumbek, and barrel shaped drums like congas. Of course, other percussion instruments like shakers, rattles, wood sounds and bells are cool instruments for accessing the inner rhythms.

2. Play! Go to drum circles; play at home or outside in nature. Free drum circles happen across California.

3. Create your own practice - Release stress after a tough day. Calm your soul by playing the heartbeat rhythm. Here is a sample play at home exercise from The Healing Drum Kit:

HeartBeat Rhythm - Lub dub. (pause)
Lub dub. (pause) Lub dub. Repeat.

Begin in silence, hand on chest. Connect with the rhythm of your own heartbeat. Befriend your personal heart song then lay it on your drum. Feel the connection to the source of love and life within you. Listen to what your heart is telling you.

Locations to Drum

Los Angeles

Remo Recreational Music Center - www.remo.com/drumcircles

Bang a Drum - www.bangadrum.com

Motherland Percussion - www.motherlandmusic.com

Raven Drum - www.ravendrumfoundation.org

UpBeat Drum Circles - www.ubdrum-circles.com

San Francisco

San Francisco's Clarion Music Center & Golden Gate Park

Center For Conscious Living, Santa

Cruz, www.somsantacruz.com

UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza

Drum Circle Locator List, located at

www.jimdonovanmusic.com

More Research and training located at www.remo.com/health

Happy drumming!

Christine

References:

1. Bittman et al. Alternative Therapy. 2001.

2. Bittman et al. Advances in Mind-Body Medicine, Fall/Winter 2003.

3. Body & Soul. May, 2005. p. 70. Energy! 20 tips to help you soar.