



Sound and Vibration

For Health and Well-Being

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The Wind and The Word

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters...” (The Bible, Genesis, 1:1-2) And in St. John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (The Bible, John, 1:1-2)

These two biblical statements in reference to creation both refer to movement (the wind) and sound (the Word.) With movement is vibration. And with vibration, is sound.

I used to think sound caused vibration. When I began learning more about vibration, I came to find that actually it's the other way around: vibration causes sound.

The movement of something – even air – results in an energetic displacement. Think of wind. You feel it against your face as you walk. And we often refer to it as “howling.” Movement of air is picked up by our auditory sense as sound.

Sri Yukteswar, in his book *The Holy Science* (1984) claims that the Eastern holy syllable, Aum (also referred to as “Om” and extended to include the Christian “Amen”) is the specific sound of the vibration caused by God at the beginning of creation.

Paramahansa Yogananda, a disciple of Sri Yukteswar, states that, “‘Word’ means intelligent vibration, intelligent energy...” (from *The Second Coming of Christ*, 1980).

Other cultures in ancient times also believed in the power of sound: the Egyptians, Chinese and Greeks. Per David Tame in *The Secret Power of Music*, the ancients believed that sound and music were tangible forces capable of creation itself by impacting the form of matter. This is seen today in videos of cymatics, where various frequencies create intricate patterns in sand, water or salt.

And so it began....

Sound and our Human Beginnings

We may not have thought of it, but we grow into our human-hood with sound. What surrounds us when we're in utero? The vibration of our mother's heartbeat. Boom, boom. Boom, boom. Nine months (more or less...) Boom, boom. Boom, boom.

For many years I offered drum circles. One of the first drumming rhythms I learned at a workshop was called "The Heartbeat of Mother Earth." Since then I have heard a couple variations of this simple beat, but they all basically recount the sound of the heart: Boom, boom. Boom, boom. The one I learned had us count silently, one, two, then do two drum beats. Others do one softer beat followed by a louder beat, without pauses for the silent counts. Or a louder beat followed by a softer one. All are effective in putting the vast majority of people into a peaceful trance-like state.

It wasn't until I attended a conference on a topic unrelated to drumming or even sound where I was able to actually hear the connection. As part of a presentation, a recording of a human heartbeat as it sounds in the womb was played. It sounded exactly like a snare drum!

No wonder so many of us resonate to drumming. How can we not? It was there while our DNA was formed. When our cells divided. Our organs were formed. Resonating through the fluid that enveloped us... Boom, boom. Boom, boom...

The Neurophysiology of Sound/Vibration

OK, it's a long title to basically ask, "How does sound affect the body?"

There are a couple ways this happens. One is through research done on the areas of the brain that show stimulation when music is heard: From the 2002 article titled "Music Changes Links in the Brain" by Robert Lee Holtz for the L.A. Times,

“Although music activated many parts of the brain, the researchers discovered that everyone had just one area in common that tracked and processed melodies. That brain region, located near the center of the forehead, is called the rostromedial prefrontal cortex. This region, which links to short-term memory, long-term memory and emotions, is different from areas involved in more basic sound processing.”

In other words, music is capable of pulling up emotionally-laden memories for us. For instance, the first time in 8th grade that I heard the group Traffic's song, "Dear Mr. Fantasy" that seemed to transport me to a mystical land. And the heart yearning a couple years later that led me to pray my roommates were sleeping as I played The Moody Blues' "Nights in White Satin" ad infinitum. We all have those songs. We can recall how old we were, where we were, and how we felt when we heard them.

Another way sound heals us comes from research done in the area of the neurophysiology of trauma. A key in these studies has been a major nerve in our body, the vagus nerve.

The vagus nerve (also known as "cranial nerve X", -- X as in the number 10) is one of twelve nerves that extend out of the brain. It is the longest nerve other than the spinal stem, running from the brain

stem past and even around several major organs (the heart, esophagus and lungs) down to the abdomen. This nerve is critical in the functioning of our heart rate and digestive process. (www.healthline.com/human-body-maps/vagus-nerve April, 2014) It also regulates oxygen intake. (“Trauma, Impulsivity and Compulsivity: Their Intrinsic Relation to the Addiction Process” conference lecture given by Peter Levine, PhD Seattle, WA March, 2009.)

One role this nerve plays is that of re-establishing balance in your system after a threat has been perceived. The threat puts the body into stress mode – what is commonly known as “fight or flight.” (What is not as widely known is another response called “freeze.” Think of the deer-in-the-headlights for a concept of this response. In that case, vital systems slow down.) For this brief discussion, I focus on the “fight or flight.”

Both fight (facing the threat) and flight (running from the threat) require a high level of activation. Messages in the form of electrical impulses and hormonal and neurotransmitter release instantly begin affecting the body. Metabolism is elevated to provide energy for the confrontation or fleeing; cortisol and adrenaline are released; heartbeat increases and more blood is pumped. The brain shuts down thinking/reasoning in favor of focusing on the limited physical options available to maximize the chance of survival.

An interesting thing occurs with trauma, however. The active aspect of fight or flight is shut down. There’s a lot of activity going on internally on a survival level, but there is no physical movement. The person’s energy is effectively trapped. A person with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) may be feeling like threats are constantly around them, activating their nerves, digestive system, heart and respiratory rate, etc..., yet they are unable to respond. Muscle tension, digestive and appetite problems, panic attacks, hypervigilance, sleep disturbance, and other symptoms can result. There is no relief because the person is unable to engage the

motions or physical modulation needed to release the inner tension. This super-arousal affects every cell in the body, bathing them in stress hormones. (Dr. Peter Levine Seattle lecture noted above.)

The vagus nerve is vital to establishing relaxation and healing in the body. In his book, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (1997), Dr. Levine talks about the need for cycles of rest to establish healing from trauma. Healing happens when a person is in a state of rest. It won't be effective if one is frantic or unable to get past the focus on what is needed to survive a perceived attack – whether the attack is from an act of war or an act of physical or sexual abuse. The body's capacity to heal itself goes into effect when we are at peace.



About the Author

Susan C. Moyer, MSW, CSP (Certified Sound Practitioner) is a practicing sound/vibrational healer, certified in Levels I and II of the SomaEnergetics tuning forks healing method. With 25 years' background as a psychotherapist, she currently focuses on holding space for deeply experiential transformational processes.

Music has been her passion since her teen years. Susan experienced her first Eupsychia Integrative Breathwork in 1990 and immediately knew this process was her life path. She earned her certification as a practitioner of Integrative Breathwork and Psychospiritual Integration in 1994 from Jacquelyn Small, MSSW and the Eupsychia Institute staff. Since then she has offered small group and individual sessions in western Wyoming; Spokane, Washington and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

From her own experience in an Integrative Breathwork session in the summer of 2013, Susan felt called to work with higher vibrational realms. Responding to this nudge from the Universe, she completed the two levels of SomaEnergetics training and has come to appreciate the clear, pure tones of the Solfeggio frequency tuning forks. Susan's education in trauma when she was a therapist combined with clients' deep healing experiences in both Breathwork and tuning fork sessions led her to research the healing benefits of sound for this booklet.

Susan lives in the Inland Northwest with her husband and a devoted senior feline companion. Her website is: <http://psychospiritualgrowth.com>