

StudioBell



National
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Bell

presents

THE

POWER

OF THE

PLAYLIST

WORKBOOK

CREATED AND FACILITATED BY
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CERTIFIED MUSIC THERAPIST



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♪ **JUST THREE WORDS**

Think about all the music you've been listening to lately—the music you have been particularly drawn to, whether on the radio in your car, or at the coffee shop, or through a streaming platform, or on your personal stereo. Imagine all the music in your life right now, and then consider the best three words to describe it. The music you listen to when you jog, the music that's playing the most at home—how would you describe it in just three simple words?

Is your music strong, soft, exciting, calm, charismatic, busy, high-energy, relaxing, edgy, fun, thoughtful, dark, light, happy, sad, inspiring, deep, confusing, harsh, bright, political, folksy, energetic, dreary, light, quirky, upbeat, joyful, soothing?

Choose three words that seem to best describe your music. Only three. Write those three words down, or just repeat them to yourself in your mind.

_____— _____— _____

Look again at your three words and say them to yourself one more time—the three words that describe the music you have been listening to the most.

Now here's the follow-up question...

Since you are so closely connected to the music you listen to and you understand your music, especially the music you feel drawn to that is so incredibly personal to you, might it not make sense that perhaps, just perhaps...

...those same three words also describe you?

Think about that for a minute. Think about the three words and whether there is any connection to how you would describe yourself.

If Yes, rest in those words for a while.

If No, is it possible that those three words represent the qualities you aspire to?

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

To be truly successful at developing a purposeful playlist, there are four critical steps to follow:

- 1** Identify your desired outcomes (goals, aims, targets, focus);
- 2** Put together the right toolkit for your needs (what you will be using to create the playlist itself: computer, phone, sound source);
- 3** Select the right music (it will be easiest if your music is accessible in digital format);
- 4** Do the exercises throughout this book, perhaps with a partner to share them with.

♪ **CHARTING YOUR AUDITORY DIET**

You may not find tables to be all that exciting, but they are highly effective tools for framing a concept; in this case, to get you thinking more deeply about the sounds in your environment. This one consists of a column for feelings, another for “sound at home,” and a third for “sound at work.” Let’s get busy...

AUDITORY DIET		
Feeling	Sound at Home	Sound at Work

In the left-hand column, list four feelings that you typically experience each week. Boredom? Joy? Frustration? Lethargy? Once you have that column filled in, think about the sounds in your home or work environment that consistently seem to trigger that specific feeling. An example would be the feeling “soothed,” and a sound you often hear at home that always makes you feel that way might be when your dog is quietly snoring.

In our day-to-day existence, we tend to put so much emphasis on the visual—what we see—but don't place as much weight or value on the auditory—what we hear. This exercise can help us build stronger connections between our feelings and our entire sound world. It can also remind us to appreciate nature's playlist—one that requires no technology whatsoever.

“I think music in itself is healing.

It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.”

BILLY JOEL

♪ #YOUR10 ALBUMS

So, here I am looking at my top 10 albums. Complete albums. Not a collection of individual songs but the entire A and B side (and sometimes there was even a second album). As I listened, stories from decades past and the home I grew up in came flooding back. I felt my feet resting on the back of the couch as I read, the music my companion in the background. My feathered hair, favorite plaid pants, and the long drive with my family to a campsite. I remembered my mom working tirelessly in the garden, and going to visit the neighbors with the Firebird in their front yard—the place where I was first introduced to Van Morrison, Peter Gabriel, and the Eagles *Greatest Hits*.

I was certain others shared these same memories, and because my social media feed most days already consisted of music and stories, I felt this would be a great fit for my followers. I started a series, releasing an album once a week like it was the first time ever it had been shared with the world. Each post was accompanied by music trivia of some sort, and a description of the personal significance of the album for me.

So sit down and ask yourself, what is #Your10? You do not have to be concerned about the sharable factor of your personal list. #Your10 can be private, just for you to savor alone. Or perhaps it's a concept you can introduce at your next gathering with family or friends, inspiring a discussion around the dinner table about the top 10 albums that have shaped their lives.

For me, this felt like an inspiring and positive exercise to contribute to social media. You can still find my #jens10 hashtag out there in cyberspace if you put it in the search. I'm curious . . . what is your #Your10 going to look like? Send me a note through social media—I would love to hear about it!

You can reach me at:

Twitter: @musictherapy

LinkedIn: jenniferbuchananinc

Instagram: @jenniferbuchanan.mta

#wellnesswellplayed

#powerofaplaylist

“Music is a language that
doesn't speak in particular
words. It speaks in emotions,
and if it's in the bones, it's in
the bones.”

KEITH RICHARDS

BUILD YOUR LIFE'S SOUNDTRACK

You'll create your life's soundtrack by selecting those songs from your music library—consisting of all the music you have encountered throughout your lifetime—that represent key events and memories. Creating our life's soundtrack offers us a glimpse into how our music choices over many decades affect us, and how the music of our life and the stories we associate with it have molded us. Specific songs or even styles of music can eventually become your anchor songs, songs that tie you to a particular feeling, so that when you hear that specific piece you feel rooted into that same emotional state time and time again—anchoring the strong, vibrant feelings you need in your day-to-day life.

The first step to begin working on your personal soundtrack is to sit back and let your mind wander and wash over some of the music that has crept in or landed hard throughout your lifetime. Even if you do not write anything down today, get your mind activated on the music that you've been influenced by since you were young.

Construct the chart on the next page on a piece of paper or on the computer.

Each category may have its own page (or several). You may feel most comfortable working on a screen or in a journal. The process is as personal as the exercise itself.

Think of your earliest musical memories, i.e., the music you enjoyed while you were at elementary school, junior high, high school, when you were a teenager, a young adult, and right up until today. As you go through each phase, remember to make notes about those memories in the side column. For each segment, make it a goal to list from three to ten songs, genres, bands, and memories.

Age	What music are you listening to at this time?	What are your associated memories?
Earliest Music Memories: Birth to Grade School		
Grade School		
Teen Years		
Adulthood		
Today		

Essentially, that's it! But remember . . . just because it seems *simple* doesn't mean it will be *easy*, which is why I have written the rest of this track to support you along the way.

As you make a list of music for each of the stages of your life, chances are you'll begin to remember specific artists, albums, and songs you had completely forgotten about. Take a moment to let those memories develop. This is not about making a list of your favorite songs; it's about making a list of musically inspired moments and memories that mean something important to you.

“No matter what these people
say about me, my music
doesn't glorify any image.
My music is spiritual when
you listen to it. It's all about
emotion, I tell my innermost,
darkest secrets.”

TUPAC SHAKUR

🎵 **YOUR SIGNATURE 12**

Even though you may not have quite completed charting your personal soundtrack, you have probably landed on many or most of the songs, albums, and artists that were most significant to you.

If narrowing your choices down to just a dozen seems impossible, this may be all the more reason why that's exactly what you should do. Perhaps even more telling than what you *do* select may be the music you choose *not* to include in your top twelve—that will open up even deeper insights into who you are and what you value. The act of building such a specialized playlist can bring forth some new clues about what music means to you that you may not have considered yet.

Music is very personal and can do a lot of heavy lifting, emotionally. It can give us that hug when we need it the most. Remember that the closer we get to our music, the clearer our vision will become. I can't think of a better way of hastening this process than by reviewing your personal soundtrack and taking it that extra step—identify your Signature 12.

🎵 **HOSTING A MUSIC HUB**

If you find the concept as intriguing as I do, here are six steps to get you started.

1. Determine What Type of Music Hub You Want to Host.

Just like a book club, your music hub can be highly social, seriously academic, or a combination of both. Maybe you want to start a music hub that focuses on your country's homegrown music, or perhaps it will travel around the globe. Or perhaps you'll want to keep the emphasis on getting to know the people in the club, as well as their music preferences. Setting a theme can help you make all the other decisions about how your music hub will look, so, whatever your focus (or lack thereof!), *make sure you determine what it is* (or determine as a group at your first meet-up) so everyone can buy into the same mission.

2. Figure Out Who You Will Welcome to Join.

Whether your music hub will be hosted just for you and a friend or will bring together a large group of strangers you've met online, it's important to have a handle on who will be able to join. Will you invite close friends only? Do you want to expand your social circle and welcome anyone who's interested? Big groups can offer a wider variety of ideas and viewpoints, but smaller gatherings can be more intimate and allow you the opportunity to really build relationships. Keep in mind that the size of your music hub will also dictate when and where you can meet, and whether it will be in-person or virtual.

3. Decide Where Your Music Hub Will Meet.

Once you know *who* you're inviting, or at least have an idea of how many people to expect, the next thing to consider is *how* you'll meet. A music hub doesn't necessarily have to meet physically. Online platforms make it easy to share music through computers.

If you prefer to host a music hub that meets physically, consider how much space you'll need. Whether in-person or online, sound quality is always a significant consideration. That's why music hubs, unlike book clubs, are not the best candidates for the coffee-shop environment. Private homes and offices are the most suitable venues for in-person gatherings, and for virtual meetings, a training session for members to optimize their online environments will need to be one of the first items on the agenda.

Some music hubs run both virtually and physically, either alternating online and in-person discussions or running both at the same time. Setting up a private social media page may be useful in this case, so participants can review the listening recommendations from that week or month at their leisure. Think about what will work best for your group of music lovers.

4. Think About How Best to Access the Music.

Each member will need to consider how they will access their new music. Will they purchase entire albums, buy individual songs, or subscribe to streaming services? Depending on individual circumstances, including means and opportunity, members may want to consider purchasing the music they are using and learning about, as a way to support the contributing artists.

5. Facilitate Great Discussion.

You've figured out all the details, everyone is happy with the concept you've chosen for your music hub, and you're excited to host your first session. Now...what are you going to talk about? Always have an opening question. There have been several scattered throughout this book that could serve as inspiration. (I would be really jazzed to learn that this book served as the focus for your hybrid book/music hub!)

Even if you've listened to a song over and over throughout your entire life, guiding a music hub discussion (or any discussion for that matter) can be a little daunting, so framing it around the day's theme or question can be useful. As you move into future meetings, it will be increasingly important for members to know the themes and questions in advance, as it will take some preparation on their part to be ready to participate fully. Listening to inspiring music and engaging in discussions about music and life as a group is a great way to promote positive interaction and make people feel good.

6. Be Mindful of the Logistics.

It can be easy to overlook some of the little details, but they can make or break the experience. Consider and decide:

- How often will your music hub meet?
- How will members share music?
- What time is best to meet that supports a variety of schedules?
- How will communications be dispatched? (e.g., private social media group or email list)
- How will homework for the next meeting be assigned?

🎵 **MAKING MUSIC WORK FOR YOU DURING DIFFICULT TIMES**

1. Use Silence as Required.

I understand that there are times we cannot remove ourselves from the music—at a friend’s house, walking through the mall—but we can still find many opportunities to take a moment, step away, and find the necessary stillness we seek. Music is a blend of sound and silence. If life is music and music is life, then silence is a necessary part of both.

2. Introduce New Music Into Your Personal Soundtrack.

With today’s technology and the ease with which we can listen to music on demand, it’s a great time to introduce yourself to brand-new music, to massage your auditory cortex and your imagination. Music stimulates creativity by increasing blood and oxygen flow to the brain, taking us from sleepy brain to stimulated brain. We often feel our happiest when we embrace our creativity, and music can help us get there.

3. Listen to Seasonal Music With No Lyrics— and Perhaps a New Rhythm.

If you identify yourself as a Non-Preferred-Christmas-Listener (NPCL), but your mom is coming over to bake her best shortbread, may I suggest sampling Christmas music with no lyrics and a new beat (think “Christmas reggae”)? During cookie-baking season this can be particularly helpful!

4. Listen to Music That Soothes.

The right music relaxes the mind and lowers cortisol levels, helping you breathe throughout a high-stress season. When used intentionally, there is ample evidence to suggest music can make a difference in lowering

anxiety and reducing your stress. Some research suggests that listening to music that soothes is as effective as taking 10 mg of valium. That's powerful stuff.

5. Use Music to Feel Connected to Those Who Have Passed.

Music is a powerful anchor that roots people to one another. If a friend or family member has passed away, hearing "their music" can make the missing that much more profound. If silence (#1) is not available to you it may be time to take a few minutes to lean into the feelings of loss. A single song may still connect you, and although tears may flow, perhaps that feeling of connection is what you needed. When the grief becomes too difficult to bear, please reach out to a friend, family member, or professional. It is not healthy to go through grief alone, and you don't have to.

6. Socialize to Your Favorite Music.

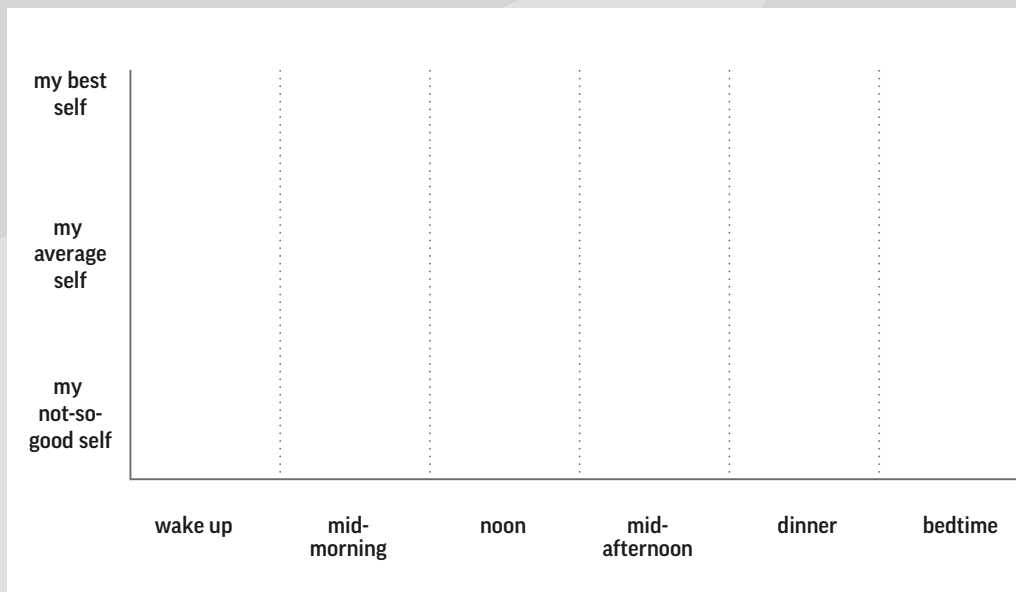
Go out and hear live music! Take along a few people you enjoy spending time with. Nothing is stopping you from creating new, more positive memories for future years to come.

"A great song should lift your
heart, warm the soul and make
you feel good."

COLBIE CAILLAT

🎵 RHYTHM OF LIFE

This exercise starts with a very simple graph.



Along the Y axis (left side), you have three mood states. I have purposefully kept these vague, because we are all going to have completely unique ways of describing our “best” self versus our “average” or “not-so-good” self. However, it is really important for you to define these states in as much detail as possible to ensure this activity is intentional and you derive the greatest benefit from it.

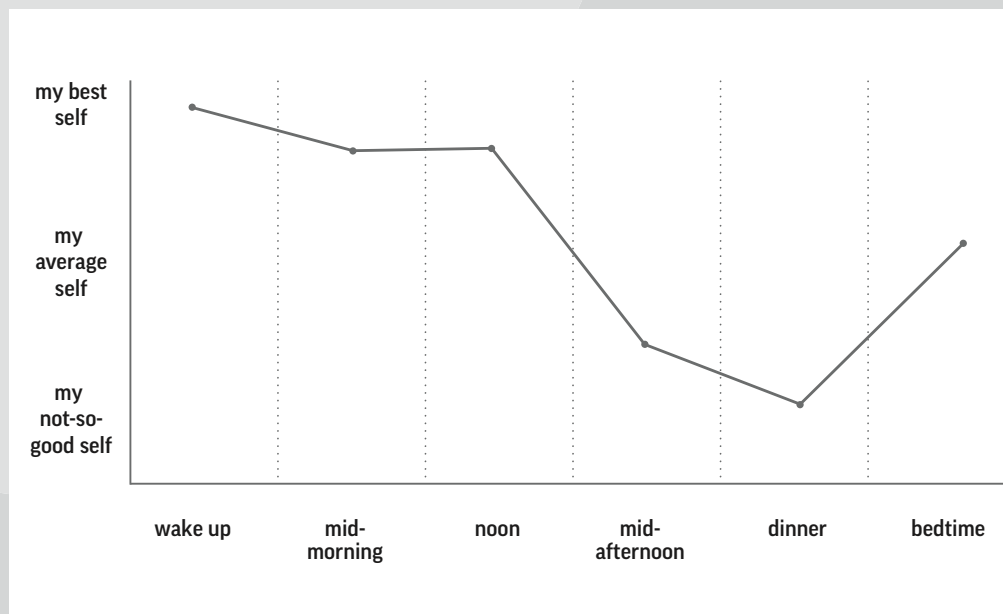
I am going to use myself as an example:

My best self: productive, smiling, wanting to connect to other humans, everything seems easier because I am happy.

My average self: relaxed, focused, able to work through a whole day but tired by the end.

My not-so-good self: overwhelmed or tired to the bone, not wanting to see even one more person, craving only wine and dessert for dinner.

The next step is to plot positions on the graph to show whatever “self” you typically feel like as you move throughout your day: when you wake up, at mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and around dinnertime.



In other words, when you wake up, are you usually feeling like your best self, like me? OR do you tend to need some time before you begin to wake up and feel somewhat inspired or motivated?

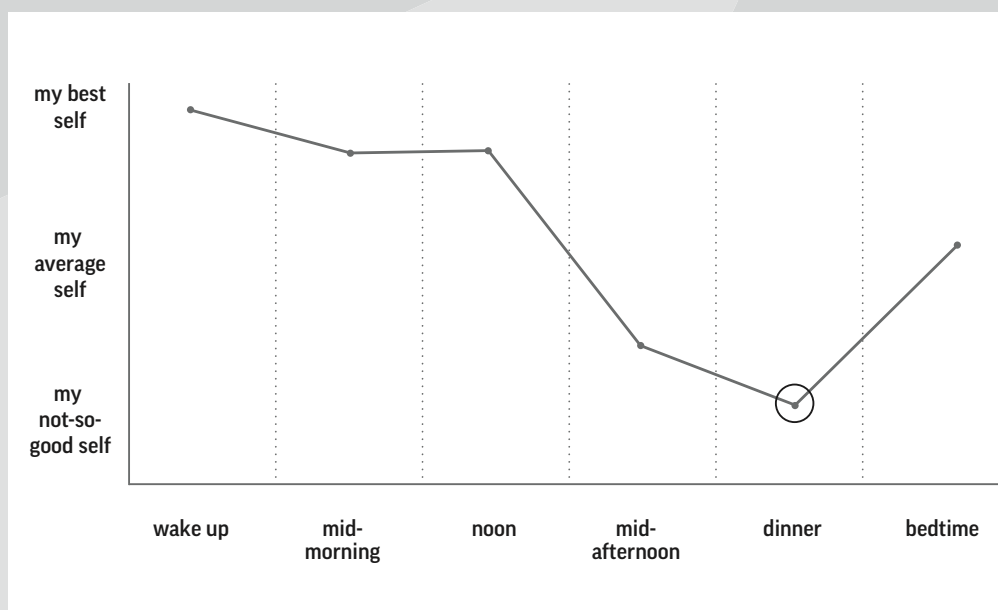
Keep in mind there is NO right, wrong, or judgment implied here—the world is full of morning people, afternoon people, and night people. I just happen to be one of the morning people (because it is the best time of day, of course!). A lot of people who feel their best self in the morning feel completely different in the evening. And there are other people who will say they are steadily their average self throughout the course of an entire day, and still others who are at their best in the evening.

After you've filled in the dots describing how you feel throughout these different times of day, draw a line to connect them, so you can actually see how your energy fluctuates throughout a typical day. Does it go up (and when?) or does it go down (and why?). The line may be pretty much level, or it may go up or down a lot, just like your own personal rhythm—your heartbeat.

The purpose of this exercise is to draw your attention to the rhythms of your average day. How do you feel about it? Is there some time of day that you feel you may want to try to change?

Circle one time where you would like to bring about a 10-percent change (up or down). For example, if you are a morning person, you may want to strive for a 10-percent upward shift around dinnertime. Or, if your energy feels too high at night, you may want to bring it down a bit sooner in the evening so you can have a more restful sleep.

To see any shift in your life, you first need to have a shift in your feelings.



As you consider that one time of day when you would most like to see a 10-percent shift, ask yourself what it might take to make that shift happen. What feeling do you need to introduce? Looking at my chart, you may feel that I need energy, and that would be a really good guess. But I have to tell you, when I hit that dinner hour after being active since 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning, the very thought of feeling energetic just depletes me more. What I feel I need most at that time of day is some quiet, a moment to feel nurtured, and the chance to refuel—not just with food, but with feelings of safety and comfort.

Ask yourself: What feeling would help you experience a 10-percent shift at the time of day you seem to need it most? Try to keep it to one word. Here are some examples:

Enthusiasm	Solitude	Energy
Focus	Stillness	Creativity
Inspiration	Safety	Joy
Freedom	Connection	Comfort

So now you have your word. One word. One feeling that you want to add to one time of day so you feel 10 percent better.

That one word *is* the name of your playlist. Not “Favorite R&B,” not “Soothing Soul”—but the exact feeling you want to achieve at that time of day. Say, “Stillness,” or “Freedom.”

Your final task to complete this exercise is to begin filling this playlist with music selections that, every time you hear them, move you closer to your desired “one-word” feeling. If you chose “Stillness,” it might be an ambient track and a jazz melody that have always made you feel calm and centered. You do not need a lot of pieces of music in this playlist; eight to twelve songs should do it, because you won’t need to be listening to it for long—just for fifteen to thirty minutes, right around the time of day you need it, or shortly before.

And—you guessed it—you can do this same exercise for ANY time of day. Perhaps you need a mid-morning playlist for “Inspiration,” and an evening playlist for “Serenity.”

I suggest you continue to use your “Rhythm of Life” playlists for as long as they work. Don’t be surprised if there comes a time when a song on one of your lists no longer evokes the feeling you aspire to. The good news is that, when that day comes, you can simply delete that song and add in a new one!

my best self						
my average self						
my not-so-good self						
	wake up	mid-morning	noon	mid-afternoon	dinner	bedtime

CREATE YOUR ANCHOR

Here are a few ideas to get you started. Choose songs with the specific intent to trigger the following feelings:

- “first thing in the morning” songs to anchor the tone of your home and give you a sense of stability.
- “get ready for school” songs that motivate you for the day ahead.
- “mealtime with the family” songs that promote socializing and a sense of comfort.
- “study so I get an A” songs that helps you feel focused.
- “relax after a stressful day” songs that take you from feeling chaotic to calm in minutes.
- “celebrating special holiday” songs that spark a sense of joy and togetherness
- any songs that inspire any other feeling you’d like to experience in the next fifteen minutes.

🎵 WHAT'S YOUR JAM?

The list is long and growing, but what genres motivate you the most? If you don't recognize a style, this is a great opportunity to do a search and grow with new music. It is also an opportunity to learn about what styles of music motivate others, helping us to develop

Which of these genres motivate you the most?

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A capella | <input type="checkbox"/> Dangdut | <input type="checkbox"/> Inkiranya | <input type="checkbox"/> Rababah |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afrobeats | <input type="checkbox"/> Drum & bass | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese folk | <input type="checkbox"/> Rafi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachata | <input type="checkbox"/> Euro-disco | <input type="checkbox"/> Jazz | <input type="checkbox"/> Raga rock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baila | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic dance music (EDM) | <input type="checkbox"/> J-pop | <input type="checkbox"/> Rap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balada | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethio-jazz | <input type="checkbox"/> Juju | <input type="checkbox"/> Reggae |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benga | <input type="checkbox"/> Flamenco | <input type="checkbox"/> K-pop | <input type="checkbox"/> Rhythm & blues (R&B) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bossa nova | <input type="checkbox"/> Gagaku court music | <input type="checkbox"/> K-trot | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bollywood | <input type="checkbox"/> Glitch pop | <input type="checkbox"/> Majika | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocksteady |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carnatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Gnawa/ethno-pop/gwani blues | <input type="checkbox"/> Mambo | <input type="checkbox"/> Opera |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celtic chant | <input type="checkbox"/> Goa trance | <input type="checkbox"/> Mariachi | <input type="checkbox"/> Polka |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese folk | <input type="checkbox"/> Grime | <input type="checkbox"/> Mbalax | <input type="checkbox"/> Salsa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese traditional opera | <input type="checkbox"/> Highlife | <input type="checkbox"/> Mento | <input type="checkbox"/> Ska |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chimurenga | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindustani | <input type="checkbox"/> Merengue | <input type="checkbox"/> Soca |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C-pop | <input type="checkbox"/> Hip-hop | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal | <input type="checkbox"/> Steel band music/pan music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calypso | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiplife | <input type="checkbox"/> Ndombolo | <input type="checkbox"/> Techno |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compas | <input type="checkbox"/> Indie rock | <input type="checkbox"/> Oldies | <input type="checkbox"/> Trance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Country | | <input type="checkbox"/> Palm wine | <input type="checkbox"/> V-pop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cumbia | | <input type="checkbox"/> Pop | <input type="checkbox"/> Zouk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dancehall | | <input type="checkbox"/> Punjabi | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Punk | |

♪ **THE MANY SIDES OF ME— PLAY TO YOUR PERSONA**

Here is a great exercise to get to know yourself (and your work colleagues, music hub members, or any other group).

We live in a busy and stressful world, and most of us have to wear many different hats. For example, you may be a mother, daughter, sister, nana, neighbor, friend, colleague, roommate, spouse, etc., and in each one of these roles, you act and feel slightly differently. Why not create a playlist for each role? Think about what music goes best with each of the roles you fill, and put together different playlists that reflect and represent these different aspects of your identity.

Take me, for example. The four different hats I typically wear throughout the day include:

1. Jenny

Only my granny called me Jenny, and my Jenny Playlist feels like cinnamon toast on my granny's back porch with a cup of real hot cocoa, overlooking her gorgeous garden. Often it would be getting late, and would feel way past my bedtime, but that was okay—because I was at granny's house! My Jenny Playlist is not about the music I was listening to back then; it's more about the music that helps me feel the way I did when I was with her: 100-percent loved, 100-percent cared for and nurtured, all the things that made me feel so good at that time of my life. When I listen to that playlist, I feel loved.

2. JB

This is the hat I wear most of the time. This is where I am at my most productive, when I'm working an awful lot. I have my JB Playlist on and I can get a lot accomplished. It's not *always* on, though. I seem to alternate between my JB playlist and silence. And I feel it's actually that alternating rhythm—playlist, silence, playlist, silence—that helps me move through the course of my day.

3. Jennifer Buchanan

Jennifer Buchanan is a bigger, bolder persona than where I sit most of the time. She shows up whenever I have to go up on the big stage and share a really important message, that I hope matters to the audience. It's that bigger-than-life place we all need to go sometimes. For some of us, that place could be even just a social setting, or perhaps it's when we need to lead a meeting at the office without any time to prepare. My Jennifer Buchanan Playlist is the one that's playing in the car as I'm driving to a gig, setting my mind and my intention and my energy in the place where I want them to be before I enter that larger space, where I have to be a bit bigger than my normal self.

4. Stella

I envision Stella back during a bygone era, listening to Miles Davis in a dark, underground jazz and blues bar somewhere in the heart of New York City. The waiter serves a scotch, neat, to my table and I breathe in the smell of a cigar from the table in front of me. I am not there to socialize, and I am not feeling alone. I have worn my favorite red heels. The house band knows all the great standards and I can hear Ella Fitzgerald singing the selections in my mind. The persona of Stella doesn't get a chance to make an appearance very often in real life so it's nice to be able to have a playlist that reminds me so vividly of a real piece of myself, filled with jazz and blues music—my Stella Playlist.

Persona 1: _____

Persona 2: _____

Persona 3: _____

Persona 4: _____

🎵 **SET YOUR PACE**

Putting together the right playlist for your workouts may simply be a matter of listening to songs on the radio or your favorite streaming service and noticing how your body responds. If whatever you're hearing makes you feel bright and you begin to move automatically, chances are it will spark a similar reaction during your upcoming workout.

Creating the perfect workout playlist is actually really simple. Focus on tempo and what makes you want to groove. The more intense you want the workout to be, the more upbeat the tempo tends to be—but remember, if you are like me and love to feel endurance, a high tempo can also make you feel like you can't keep up.

Here is a list of general tempo guidelines in the exercise world that should help you get started with your workout playlist:

- Yoga, pilates, and other low-intensity activities: 60 to 90 BPM
- Power yoga: 100 to 140 BPM
- CrossFit, indoor cycling, or other forms of HIIT: 140 to 180-plus BPM
- Zumba and dance: 130 to 170 BPM
- Steady-state cardio, such as jogging: 120 to 140 BPM
- Weightlifting and powerlifting: 130 to 150 BPM
- Warming up for exercise: 100 to 140 BPM
- Cooling down after exercise: 60 to 90 BPM

There are many BPM counting apps that can help you find the best music for you that fall in these speeds, as well many pre-made exercise playlists to help you get up and moving. The big streaming services all provide a wide variety of such playlists.

🎵 **BREATHE**

That's it. Just Breathe.

The research is clear that three deep breaths can reduce your fight-or-flight response. By breathing more deeply you can break the cycle of panic. Breathing exercises can help reduce tension and relieve stress, thanks to the extra boost of oxygen they give you. While shallow breathing, a marker of stress, stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, deep breathing does the opposite and helps us to calm down.

What's more, breathing exercises have been proven to support the systems that can be harmed by stress. A moment of silence with just deep breathing can reduce blood pressure and may even be able to change the expression of some genes. Everybody has an overwhelm point, though when we reach it is different for each of us. Many of us just keep pushing through the stress, but our goals of accomplishment and productivity become much harder to achieve when we're in this state. With the simple act of pausing wherever you are and taking three deep breathes, you are combating those stress responses and putting your body in a healthier place to better cope with whatever is to come.

Bell

**Thanks to Bell for supporting NMC's
The Power of the Playlist program.**

This is a *Bell for Better* initiative, designed to build and connect communities through music.

[BELL.CA/BELL-FOR-BETTER](https://bell.ca/bell-for-better)

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