**INTRODUCTION**

**What is Music**

“Music” is so naturally united within us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desire. Music is present within us, around us. It is a gift of ‘Goddess Saraswati’ to the living organisms. There is music in the chirping of the birds, in the various animal sounds too. The sounds of the wind and the sea also play music. There is music in cry of the new-babies. The swaras: Sa, Re, G, Me, Pe, Dh, Ni, Sa are all present within us. Yet very few of us are really lucky to either master or at least have some knowledge about this divine gift of the Goddess ie: music.

Music can have a great impact on our moods. It makes you forget yourself. When at times, you are not able to achieve your targets and feel as if you are a failure in life, you just listen to some motivating songs with concentration. They will pep you up and just see how efficiently you will start working again. When you feel sad and upset, listen to some sad song that actually brings tears in your eyes. They will give a vent to your emotions. They will make you feel lighter and gradually just bring you back to normal.

Music can be used as a healer, relaxer and mediator. Music is a kind of yoga system, through the medium of sonorous sounds (sounds that are not audible to the ear, but they have an impact on the functioning of the brain also influence our thought processes). These sounds act upon the human organism, awaken and develop his proper functions to the extent of self-actualization.

It’s music that helped Thomas Jetterson to write the ‘Declaration of Independence’. When he could not figure out the right wordings for a certain part, he would play his violin to help him. Music helped him to get his words on to paper.

When Albert Einstein was young, he did extremely poor in school. His teacher told his parents to take him out of school because he was too stupid to learn and that it would be a waste of resources for the school to invest time and energy in his education. Albert’s parents bought him a violin. Music was the key that helped Albert Einstein to become one of the smartest men who has ever lived.

**Music and Self-Esteem**

Music also helps us to accomplish non musical goals. One of these goals is the enhancement of our “Self-Esteem” [ie: our self-image or self-confidence] Self-Esteem plays an important role in enhancing the academic performance of a student.

**Music and Academic Performance.**

When we are listening to music, many different areas of the brain respond to the perceptual and emotional aspects of music.

The National Commission of Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that middle and high schools should provide vigorous programs in music. According to NCEE, involvement in music improves a student’s self-discipline, co-ordination, thinking skills, listening skills, creative abilities and personal expression.

Researchers have discovered that information learned, while listening to a particular song can often be recalled simply by playing the song mentally.
Music As a Technique To Help Children With Learning Disabilities.

Learning to play a music instrument may help dyslexia students. A study conducted at the Stanford University showed that mastering a musical instrument improves the ability to process parts of the spoken language.

Teachers could incorporate music in their everyday teaching to help children with dyslexia and other learning disability to improve academic performance and increase reading and writing skills.

1) Students can learn to break a word into syllables by clapping or tapping for each syllable.

2) Students can learn rhythm or songs to learn grammar lessons.

3) Students can learn facts in history by putting the information into music.

4) Songs from different cultures can help students to learn history and social studies and improve their understanding for different cultures and the world around.

5) Steps in maths can be learned by clapping or rhythm to improve an understanding of patterns and sequences.

Music Can Help Slow Learners To Memorize Better.

Music is known to be very relaxing and stimulating, especially to developing minds.

What is Concentration?

Concentration means focusing of the mind on one thing for the purpose of learning, thinking, completing a task, creating something new or novel and even meditating.

Concentration is a skill that can be learnt with practice. If mastered, it can greatly improve productivity and quality of work. Concentration is a key to one’s success. The power of concentration is within us, just waiting to be set free.

Techniques To Improve Concentration.

A) CONCENTRATION TECHNIQUES BY GREC FROST.

1) Stretch Your Limits.

You often experience moments at work when your mind starts wandering and is unable to steadily focus. You feel, you just need a break. Instead of an immediate break, stretch your limits by pushing yourself to complete 15 more minutes at work before you take a break.

2) Focus On One Thing At A Time.

Just as horses have blinders to keep them staring in one direction, you need to develop a mental equivalent to keep focused at the task at hand.

3) It Is Ok To Take A BREAK.

No matter how good our concentration, one must take short breaks which rejuvenates us and enables us to take up more challenges after a short break.
4) **Variety Is The Key.**

Your mind needs stimulation and variety to remain engaged and interested in the task at hand. If your mind is just focused on one particular task for the entire day or a long period of time, your attention is most likely to get wavered or reduced with the advancement of time. It is thus necessary to have a change in the activity.

B) **TRATAKA MEDITATION BY ANMOL MEHTA.**

This technique is also called ‘CANDLE FLAME GAZING TECHNIQUE’.

- Sit in a relaxing position, with the spine straight.
- Place your hands in ‘Gyan Mudra’ (tips of the thumb and the index finger touch each other). Rest your wrists on your knees. ‘Gyan Mudra’ helps in concentration.
- Make sure the room is dark and there is no breeze.
- Light a candle and make sure it is 3 feet away from you and at your eye level.
- Begin to gaze steadily at the candle flame without blinking as long as you are comfortable.
- Once your eyes are tired, close them and then position the after-image of the flame at the centre of your forehead (at the third-eye chakra).
- Once the image fades completely, open your eyes and begin again to focus on the candle flame.
- Continue this cycle for 5-10 minutes.
- Keep increasing the time limit by 5 minutes each time till you reach 20 minutes.

C) **CONCENTRATION EXERCISES BY AUSTON BUSINESS SCHOOL.**

**Exercise One.**

- Sit in a comfortable position and remain still as long as you can.
- Increase the time limit from 5 minutes to 10 minutes and then 15 minutes.
- Never strain yourself to keep still. Relax completely.

**Exercise Two.**

- Fill a glass full of water and grasp it with your fingers, with one arm.
- Put this arm directly in front of you.
- Now fix your eyes upon the glass and try to keep the arm so steady such that no movement is noticeable.
- Do this first for 1 minute and then increase it to 5 minutes.
- Do this exercise first with one arm and then with the other.

D) **EASTERN TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE CONCENTRATION POWER.**

1) **Focus On Breathing.**

This type of meditation focuses on breathing. It draws your concentration on an internal point of focus, bringing clarity to our thought and helps self-discovery.
2) **Focus On An Object In The Environment.**
This type of meditation helps the brain to become more aware of a single thought or object, increasing the capacity for concentration.

E) **MIND EXERCISES BY TAMAR WEINBERG.**
- Go to a completely isolated room.
- Sit either on a chair or on the floor with the spine erect.
- Breathe deeply and relax your body.
- Lie down and thoroughly relax your muscles.
- Concentrate on the within. Concentrate on your heart. Do not pay attention to anything else.
- Think how the great organ is pumping blood to every part of the body.
- Try to actually picture the blood leaving the great reservoir and going in one stream right down the toes.
- Imagine another picture going down the arms to the tip of the fingers.
- After sufficient practice you can actually feel the blood passing through your system.

F) **CONCENTRATION TECHNIQUES BY REMEZ SASSON.**
**Exercise One.**
Count backwards in your mind from 100 to 1.
**Exercise Two.**
Count backwards in your mind from 100 to 1, skipping each 3 Numbers: 100, 97, 94, etc.
**Exercise Three.**
Take a fruit (an apple or an orange) and hold it in your hand.
Examine it from all sides, while keeping your whole attention is focused on it.
Ignore all irrelevant thoughts that come to your mind. Examine and concentrate on the shape, smell, taste and sensation of the fruit while touching and holding it.
**Exercise Four.**
Visualize the fruit instead of looking at it. Close your eyes and try to see, smell, taste and touch it in your imagination. Try to see a clear and well-defined image. If the imagine is blurred, open your eyes, look at the fruit for a short while and then close your eyes and continue the exercise.
**Exercise Five.**
Try to stay without thoughts for at least 5 minutes.

G) **THE BRAIN GYM EXERCISES.**
**Brain Buttons.**
- Put one hand such that there is wide space between the thumb and the index finger.
- Place your index finger and thumb below the collar bone on each side of the sternum. Press lightly in a pulsing manner.
- At the same time, put the other hand in the navel area of the stomach.
Gently press on these points for about 2 minutes.
This exercise improves blood flow to the entire brain.
The increased blood flow improves concentration skills.

Cross Crawl.
Stand or sit.
Put the right hand across the body to the left knee as you raise it and the left hand across the right knee as if you were marching.
This exercise helps to co-ordinate the right and the left brain by exercising the information flow between the 2 hemispheres, thus helping us to improve our concentration skills.

H) MUDRAS TO IMPROVE CONCENTRATION.
The Power of Mudras.

Mudras are a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression consisting of hand gestures and finger postures. Mudras are nature’s way of healing.

The finger tips of every living being have many concentrated nerve root endings which are free energy discharge points. Science also confirms that around every tip there is a concentration of free electrons. By touching together of the tips of the fingers or the finger tips to the other parts of the palms, this free energy (or Prana) is redirected back into the body along specified channels, back right up to the brain. Since mudras work on the nerves, they are a ‘neural science’.

1) The Gyan/Om Mudra.
Sit with a straight back.
Create the sacred ‘Gyan/Om Mudra’ by connecting the index finger and thumb of the same hand.
Create the mudra with both your hands.
The thumb is the gateway to ‘the divine will’ and the index finger is the ego.
As you do this mudra, sit in a meditating position and chant ‘OM’.

2) The Smiling Buddha Mudra.
Sit either with crossed legs or on a straight backed chair.
Bend ring and little fingers, pressing them down with the thumbs of both the hands.
Keep the index and middle fingers straight and palms forward.
Concentrate on the third-eye.
Concentrate for about 10 minutes.

I) CHAKRAS AND CONCENTRATION.
We have 7 chakras in the body which are responsible to carry out certain functions. The ‘Agya Chakra’ or the ‘third-eye chakra’ is responsible for memory enhancement, creativity,
higher spiritual intuition and development of psychic powers.
The mantra to open the ‘agya chakra’ is ‘Om’.

To stimulate the agya chakra:
- Sit in a comfortable position, either crossed legged or on a chair.
- Take 5 deep breaths to open and fill up your lungs.
- Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply with each breath.
- Close your eyes and focus on the point between your brows, on your forehead i.e: on the third-eye.
- Your eyes should naturally move up without you having to them. Continue for about 2 minutes.
- The recitation of ‘Om’ facilitates this process.

J) THE SRI CHAKRA AND CONCENTRATION.
   This is another interesting technique to increase the concentration power of the brain. The ‘Sri Chakra’ is an ancient Indian symbol or design which consists of a concentric series of triangles cumulating in one singular triangle at the centre. There are 43 triangles in all.
   The power of concentration can be increased by focusing at the central dot in the ‘Sri Chakra’, which is located in the central triangle of the ‘Sri Chakra’.

K) VISUALISATION.
   This concentration technique deals with actually seeing, visualizing or feeling a skill a task performance or event an athletic event in one’s mind, even before completing it in reality. This inculcates a positive attitude, boosts the morale of the individual and thus enhances performance.

Concentration, Memory and Academic Performance.

Improving both concentration and memory, includes learning how to clear your mind, improve focus and if necessary looking at what blocks you from efficiently using your mental capacity.

Concentration and memory work together. To concentrate is to direct your mental power or your efforts towards a particular activity, subject or problem. Memory is the ability of an individual to remember experiences and people. Good concentration will enhance memory thus leading to academic excellence. There are some specific skills that can be learned to enhance both concentration and memory such as concentrating on the flame of a burning candle for a certain duration of time.

Music and Concentration.

Many research studies have proved that relaxing music improves the duration and intensity of concentration in all age groups and ability levels.
A combination of music and meditation (in the form of concentration) helps memory enhancement and facilitates academic performance, creating a balance in the physical and mental functioning of the individual. Music helps to stimulate the ‘agya chakra’ or the ‘third-eye chakra’ which is responsible for memory enhancement and creativity.