

Mindful listening - a five-minute exercise

This exercise is designed to open your ears to sound in a non-judgmental way; to train your mind to be less swayed by the influence of past experiences and preconceptions.

So much of what we “feel” is influenced by past experience. For example, we may dislike a song because it reminds of us of a negative time in our lives.

The idea of this exercise is to listen to some music from a neutral standpoint, with an awareness that is unhindered by preconception.

Select a piece of music you have never heard before. You may have something in your own collection that you have never listened to, or you might choose to turn the radio dial until something catches your ear.

1. Close your eyes and put on your headphones.
2. Try not to get drawn into judging the music by its genre, title or artist name before it has begun. Instead, ignore any labels and neutrally allow yourself to get lost in the journey of sound for the duration of the song.
3. Allow yourself to explore every aspect of the track. Even if the music is not to your liking at first, let go of your dislike and give your awareness full permission to climb inside the track and dance among the soundwaves.
4. Explore the song by listening to the dynamics of each instrument. Separate each sound in your mind and analyse each one by one.
5. Hone in on the vocals: the sound of the voice, its range and tones. If there is more than one voice, separate them out as you did in step 4.

The idea is to listen intently, to become fully entwined with the composition without preconception or judgment of the genre, artist, lyrics or instrumentation. Don't think, hear.