

The Healthiest Self-Medication

“. . . I felt outside of everything, not part of anything . . . “
anonymous

You hear these phrases at AA meetings, or at 12-step meetings based on any of the many addictions. You hear it a lot when people tell the story of their childhood and going to school. Children who turn to drink and/or drugs (or some other mix of criss-crossed addictions/fixations/obsessions) as teenagers, do so because they feel like outsiders, feel like they don't *belong to*, feel not *part of*, are wondering how they will ever become comfortable “inside my own skin.” And the drink and/or the drugs and/or the sex and/or the eating, consuming, fantasizing can feel like healing, feels like *belonging to*, being *part of*, inside at last -- in with the in crowd AND safely inside one's own skin AND maybe even into the one, the all, the cosmic whoopedoooo! But only while the self-medication lasts. The other thing you hear over and over and over again at AA and 12-step meetings is that a lot of these self-“medication” attempts will kill you or turn your life into something like hell either very quickly, or eventually as “the progression” takes hold and time passes you by. . . until you die.

Fortunately, there is a very healing feeling, a lot of belonging, total participation and a happy high of highs for each person when they “keep together in time” by musicking and/or dancing and/or singing and/or drumming and/or performing. In many traditional cultures (of course, not the great Western one this past century or so) children were expected to learn how to drum-sing-and-dance all at the same time -- you move your feet and sway in time to the music as you drum or play tamborine or guiro or shaker while singing a song. And for all children anywhere in the world the first impulse is to be the character in the drama who sings-dances-drums-performs all at the same time, just as a natural part of enacting your story, demonstrating the myth in full ritual. Three and four year olds want to do this, and they do it! Until media and technology and school and division of labor and the "5 obstacles" (Ch. 38) shut them down.

They are born to groove, born to belong, born to be part of, born to participate and never be alienated from self, body, society or nature.

If they get good at the “languages” or skills of primary communication, they can never be deeply alienated. If they get very good at these skills very early in life, they will always have a way to feel belonging, part of, inside, without having to “self-medicate” in any of the destructive and deadly ways we are coming to know so well.

play your part to be part of

Pat Campbell:

Music has long been a medication of sorts and a therapy for certain. Preliterate cultures have held that there is a close relationship between music and healing, and many have perceived music as an integral part of a healthy and peaceful life. Medical practitioners of Egypt as long along as 5000 B.C. referred to music as medicine for the

soul. Healing rites at the peak of Babylonian culture (circa. 2000 B.C.) included music. In seventh-century Greece, Thales was said to have had the musical power to cure a plague in Sparta.

The ancient Greeks and Romans maintained that music was a means of putting the emotions in balance, redirecting anger, and providing the reality check for going mad. In extreme cases of human illness and imbalance across history, music has been a force to bring about changes in behavior and attitude. How does it feel to make music? Ask a child, and her response may well be one big burst of a radiant smile.

- For a look at music and the arts as therapy in early human history, read The Expressive Arts Therapies, by E. and B. Feder (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981).