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## Music Therapy for Dogs

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Past studies have shown that music (and other sounds) can profoundly influence animal behavior. Music therapy for pets is one way to help a dog with behavioral or anxiety problems. Does your poodle whine and pace when the alarm clock goes off? Does your German shepherd bark uncontrollably when your neighbors mow their lawn? Is your boxer afraid of guests? You might want to head straight for your CD player.

Though a dog doesn't tap his foot as a person might, their internal organs do speed up or slow down in accordance with external rhythms (a process called entrainment) and respond to the vibrations around them.

In today's noisy world, full of sirens, motorcycles, and leaf blowers, in households with multiple TVs, computer printers and food processors, dogs might just be overloaded with sensory input.

"Music is one way to control and mediate the sound environment," said sound researcher Joshua Leeds, who recently co-authored a new book and CD set called *Through A Dog's Ear: Using Sound to Improve the Health & Behavior of Your Dog* with veterinary neurologist Susan Wagner.

### Canines prefer classical

With 20 years of research in psychoacoustics (the effect of sound on the human nervous system), Leeds was approached by award-winning pianist and dog-lover Lisa Specter to help create music that could calm and modify dog behavior. The group drew from previous studies that found a canine preference for classical music.

Leeds applied psychoacoustic principles of tone, rhythm and pattern identification to handpicked, modified, and rearranged traditional classical pieces to create canine music of simplified sound. The results were dramatic.

The researchers found that 70 percent of dogs in kennels and 85 percent of dogs in households showed a reduction in stressed-out behavior when listening to the CD, including thunderstorm trembling, excitement with visitors and separation anxiety.

"When I witnessed the results of the calming music on my own canine patients and those of my colleagues, I knew this was breakthrough work in music therapy for dogs," Wagner said.

So while car alarms and even computer prompts can yield negative – and even aggressive – behavior, music can deeply relax and improve the general health and well being of dogs.

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