

Learning to play music enhance well-being?

Yes, **learning to play music enhances well-being** across age groups, though effects vary by population and context.

Does learning to play music enhance well-being?

Requires at least 5 papers that directly answer your question. Try adjusting your query to find more papers.

FIGURE 1 Research consensus on music learning and well-being

A scoping review of 30 sources found that all but one reported music learning supported well-being in children and adolescents (Goopy & MacArthur, 2025). A meta-analysis of music-based interventions confirmed a significant positive association with subjective well-being (SMD = 0.36, $p = 0.02$) (Zhang et al., 2025). A systematic review of 61 records concluded there is reliable evidence for positive effects of music and singing on well-being in adults (Daykin et al., 2017).

Mechanisms of Well-Being Enhancement

Learning to play music enhances well-being through multiple psychological pathways. A daily-diary study of 1,042 hobby musicians found that on days when participants made music, positive affect was higher and negative affect was lower, with the effect mediated by satisfaction of the needs for **autonomy, competence, and relatedness** (Koehler & Neubauer, 2020). The enjoyment of playing instruments shares 34.8% of variance with life satisfaction, with the sense of achievement and pride being the strongest contributor (Zhang et al., 2024). Music education improves psychological well-being partly through self-efficacy and self-esteem as mediating factors (Jiang, 2024).

Active music making supports well-being by providing a sense of **purpose, autonomy, and social affirmation** (Creech et al., 2013). Flow states experienced during music performance are significantly associated with subjective well-being, with stronger relationships for individuals possessing a flexible self-concept (Loepthien & Leipold, 2021). The PERMA framework — positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment — captures the five dimensions through which music practice contributes to a flourishing life (Croom, 2015).

Effects Across Populations

Population	Key Findings	Citation
Older adults	Piano training decreased depression, induced positive mood, and improved QOL over 4 months	(Seinfeld et al., 2013)
University students	Music education improved psychological well-being, reducing anxiety and improving mood	(Jiang, 2024)
Children (7–9 yrs)	Extra-curricular musical training increased IQ by 7 points; no socio-emotional effects found	(Rose et al., 2019)

Population	Key Findings	Citation
Clinical populations	Music training showed large effects on SWB (SMD = 1.76) in clinical groups	(Zhang et al., 2025)
Hobby musicians	Higher positive affect and need satisfaction on music-making days	(Koehler & Neubauer, 2020)

FIGURE 2 Well-being outcomes of music learning across populations

Older adults who learned instruments reported wellbeing benefits through musically-nuanced engagement, enhanced social interactions, fulfillment of musical ambition, and self-satisfaction through progress (Perkins & Williamon, 2014). A 10-week piano program for older novices showed improved visuo-motor skills, with group dynamics and familiar repertoire driving motivation (Macritchie et al., 2020). Among novice university students, six months of piano training produced significant gains in both working memory and subjective well-being with large effect sizes (Xue, 2026).

Nuances and Limitations

- A twin study found individuals playing an instrument may have a **somewhat increased risk** for mental health problems, complicating the relationship (Musgrave, 2022).
- For those developing career ambitions as musicians, wellbeing outcomes are far less clear than for hobbyists (Musgrave, 2022).
- Music training showed no significant association with SWB in nonclinical populations (SMD = -0.32), with effects concentrated in clinical groups (Zhang et al., 2025).
- Most studies of older adults are correlational, leaving the causal relationship between music instruction and wellbeing undetermined (Macritchie et al., 2020).
- Whether wellbeing gains are specific to music learning rather than structured activity in general remains an open question requiring active control groups (Perkins & Williamon, 2014; Xue, 2026).

Controlling behaviors by music teachers hinder student well-being, while autonomy-supportive teaching and transmission of passion enhance it (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2020). Socially isolated individuals are more difficult to engage in music groups and report lower confidence and self-esteem gains (Dingle et al., 2021). The context in which music is used matters: singing without an audience reduces cortisol, while performing before an audience increases it (Musgrave, 2022). Despite these caveats, the overall evidence base — spanning children, adults, older adults, and clinical populations — consistently supports that learning to play music is associated with enhanced well-being, with the strongest effects in clinical groups and older adults.

These search results were found and analyzed using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>. © 2026 Consensus NLP, Inc. Personal, non-commercial use only; redistribution requires copyright holders' consent.

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