



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

**BRAIN
HEALTH
INITIATIVE**



ACADEMY FOR
BRAIN HEALTH
AND PERFORMANCE

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



What a difference a few weeks makes; the current COVID-19 crisis has rearranged our world in irreversible and generation-defining ways. And as our nation enters one of its greatest tests over the next few weeks, it's important to cultivate and nurture the idea of "hope" with as much care as possible.

During the COVID-19 outbreak and recovery, the Brain Health Initiative will continue to offer **Brain Boosts**, including playlists and film suggestions to promote and support brain health.

Why hope? Hope is important for your brain.

Neuroscientists have investigated the science of hope and implications to promoting brain health and fighting brain illness. It turns out that a positive feeling of hopefulness changes our brain in ways that enhance our overall performance and well-being. Hope, which involves belief and expectation, causes the brain to release neurochemicals called endorphins and enkephalins. The result is that the brain can more easily overcome hurdles and move to a place of calm and recovery.

Hope is predicated on the belief that all conditions are temporary, and we are headed toward positive. The world will now be different than the one we perhaps imagined it might have been, even a few weeks ago. And in this process of transformation, people are uniting to help and inspire each other in ways that will carry us through to the other side of this global experience — and far beyond.

What does music and film have to do with brain health?

Many of us use music to support our mood, but most people do not understand the science behind how music has the ability to promote our brain health and enhance the daily performance of our brain and body. Science demonstrates that not only are humans hardwired for music, but studies also agree that music positively activates multiple regions of the human brain (from the amygdala to the hippocampus) and boosts our emotions, memory, health, healing, and overall well-being. Feel good messages generated in film have similar implications.

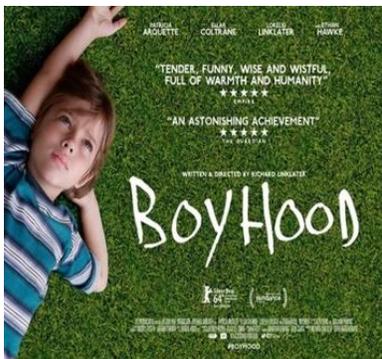
Given music's powerful ability to protect the health of our brain and body, as well as to fight brain illness, the Brain Health Innovation Lab, a component of the Brain Health Initiative, intends to offer clinical trials around music and sound innovation that could actively increase functioning of our brains, bodies and performance.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH TODAY

This week, during this season of faith, we have created a playlist and selected a film to inspire hope, goodness, optimism and renewal. Try engaging in a mindfulness exercise where you listen to music (even just one song) for a set time each day. Listen to the music carefully and tune out other distractions. Keep a journal, noting how the music or the film affected your mood, thoughts, feelings, emotions and physical state.

Please find a few song suggestions below or view the entire playlist: [Hope, Goodness, Optimism and Renewal](#)

- **Mercy**, Dave Matthews Band
- **Stronger**, Kelly Clarkson
- **Try**, Pink
- **Bad Day**, Daniel Powter
- **I'm Still Standing**, Elton John
- **Give Me Love**, George Harrison
- **Good Day**, Jewel
- **You Raise Me Up**, Josh Groban
- **I Smile**, Kirk Franklin



A movie suggestion of hope and renewal: **Boyhood (2014)**. From a brain health promotion perspective, *Boyhood* is a reminder that life is an ongoing series of alternating hardships and good fortune. How we cope and respond to the trials and tribulations in life, is a choice and will lead to the ultimate outcome of our accumulated days and experiences. Especially during our current experience, *Boyhood* reminds us to focus on today, our immediate surroundings and the people closest to us with a sense of hope for the future.

What music and films do you listen to and watch to inspire hope? Make a list to fall back on when you feel your stress level beginning to rise or your mood starting to dip. More research indicates that positive mood enhances the immune systems and helps to fight off infectious diseases, so use this “universal language” to your advantage!