



Harp Therapy is Heart Therapy!

The harp has been used for healing for millennia, spanning back to ancient Egypt. The most well-known tale of a harp in the Bible is the story of David playing for King Saul, to soothe the king when he was tormented. In the Middle Ages in Europe there was a wisdom known as *Ars Moriendi*, or the art of dying, practiced in monasteries, by which our ancestors sought not only to alleviate physical pain but to heal spiritual pain. They understood that as long as we are alive, there is still potential for healing and resolution. The harp was often the instrument of choice in ancient healing practice because of its unique healing effect.

So, what is it, you may ask, that makes the harp special and so uniquely suited to easing pain, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual? There is a musical term known as *timbre* which refers to the tone quality or color of sound. Timbre is what makes one instrument's sound or one person's voice distinct from another. Timbre is determined by *overtones*, or harmonics, which are sympathetic tones that vibrate above the note being sung or played. For example, a person's voice will be soothing to the ear if the overtones are consonant with the fundamental tone. However, a person's voice has a strident quality when the overtones are dissonant with the fundamental tone.

The harp has a unique series of overtones, created by its construction and its freely vibrating strings, which have a soothing effect on people and animals. In energy healing modalities it is believed that the fundamental tone works on the physical body, while the overtones interact with the aura, or bioelectric field surrounding a person. A person can experience the healing vibrations of the harp by listening to a recording, but listening to a live harpist is much more powerful by far.

Another effective way to experience the healing vibrations of the harp is to play one! Interactive harp therapy is part of the method taught in the International Harp Therapy Program. You may suppose that a person would have to be a somewhat advanced player to experience the benefits, but this is not so. In the IHTP we learn to make healing through the harp accessible to all who want to pick up a harp. First and foremost, the construction of the harp lends itself to deliver its most powerful benefits to the person playing as the sound holes are on the back of the instrument, where the harpist holds it against his/her torso. The healing vibrations of the harp are transmitted directly to the heart!

~ Kirsti Kaldro, Therapeutic Harp Practitioner (CHTP)

