

A Barry University Professor's New Research Suggests Harnessing Your Subconscious May Make Exercise More Enjoyable

It's no secret that great music can really fuel a great workout, but a new study led by a Barry University Assistant Professor of Sports, Exercise & Performance Psychology found watching music videos that contain positive *subliminal* messages while working out could make exercise more enjoyable and actually feel easier.

In research recently published in [Annals of Behavioral Medicine](#), Dr. Suzanne Pottratz and her colleagues found that people walking on a treadmill and watching videos edited to subtly flash undetectable positive words like "happy," "enjoyable," and "joyful," felt better and like they weren't working as hard as when they were watching the same videos without the hidden cues.

The study, *Prime Movers: Effects of Subliminal Primes, Music, and Music Video on Psychological Responses to Exercise* is an international collaboration between Dr. Pottratz at Barry University, Dr. Jasmin Hutchinson and Dr. Elizabeth Mullin at Springfield College, Dr. Costas Karageorghis at Brunel University London, and Dr. Zachary Zenko at California State University, Bakersfield.

According to Dr. Pottratz, lead author of the study, the research is aimed at those of us who really struggle when it comes to finding motivation to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"Ideally, we want to help people who don't enjoy exercise find a way to make it more enjoyable and encourage exercise adherence," said Dr. Pottratz. "We know there's an obesity problem. We know many people are living a sedentary lifestyle and just aren't very active. That's resulted in a lot of people who don't enjoy exercise."

The hope is that the findings can someday help all of us stick to our exercise goals.

"Our next steps are to see how we can apply this in a meaningful way," said Dr. Pottratz. "Gyms have screens all over the place. Can they play music videos with these hidden cues?"

Other possible uses discussed in the journal article include incorporating videos with subliminal primes in the visual interface of a Peloton stationary bike, or other in-home fitness solutions.

One hitch? It needs to be unconscious. "If you know the primes are embedded in a video, it wouldn't necessarily work the same way," Dr. Pottratz points out.