

[Start with chatter]

My brain is loud. [adjust volume of chatter to accompany me speaking]

Loud, obnoxious, and overwhelming. It's been this way since I was in elementary school and I'm not sure if it is ever going to go away completely.

All of the time I find myself overthinking the simplest tasks, to the point where sometimes I can't actually begin working on something because I can't pinpoint a specific way to approach it.

I grew up in a close knit town, not entirely obscure but small enough that everyone is familiar with everyone else. [kids playing] This can come at an advantage if you're well known or if you are outspoken. In my case, I was known to be a respectful and intelligent black girl. This leads into the disadvantage of living in a small town, the old and ill-educated mindsets are easily passed down and retorted in backwards logic and poorly hidden racism and discrimination. [kids fades into a church organ]

[church organ plays a hymn]

My parents taught me lessons about these social issues at a very young age, the earliest memory I have of the "racism in America" talk was when I was five years old. I was told about the struggles black people have went through and how, despite many amazing efforts of those like Martin Luther King Jr., there are still many issues that still go unsolved.

Talks such as these almost always led to watching activist speeches and films about civil rights movements in the 60s and afterward. [MLK speech clip] In these, there were always songs, hymnals, that left an impression on me. These hymnals, often sung by a strong heavily accented southern gospel choir, really tended to cement the authenticity of the struggles that black people went through simply by the sound of their voices and the strength of the melodies. [We Shall Overcome clip plays then fades back to chatter]

[chatter continues]

When I was nine my mother spoke of how these gospel hymnals made her feel the same way and that the singers would express themselves, their thoughts and feelings into their music. It helped them communicate their sorrows and let the black community come together as a way of union in the midst of chaos through lyrics.

[Ed Sheeran's "The Parting Glass" plays then fades]

So, I started listening to music in an entirely new way from then on. I let myself be carried away in the music and listened to people's stories, their hearts, and music became the way that I could sift through my thoughts as well. When listening to music, my brain was a lot less overwhelming and loud.

[--a pause--]

As I grew older and moved on to middle school in a new part of town with students I wasn't as familiar with, the pressure seemed to build again and the noise increased ten-fold. [chatter fades in]

All I could think about was how to get good grades, a great GPA, I also started talking to my parents about college at this time. Everyone I knew just piled on their expectations of me.

Eventually, the music I listened to just became another song filled with too many words--just more people talking. The thing that used to bring me comfort brought me more stress. [chatter increases for a bit]

Then, I went to Florida.

[theme park sounds begin]

My parents took me and a friend to Orlando Resort and at the end of the trip as we were leaving I saw a poster for a performance by the Blue Man Group. I'd instantly recognized them. Blue Man Group are a trio of men who are dressed in black suits covered in (you guessed it) blue paint who play the drums and other one-of-a-kind instruments and create some of the most amazing music I've ever heard. ["Drumbone" audio clip begins] The catch...they don't speak. It's just the music. Occasionally they have guest singers accompany them but the concert itself is all about how creative the men can be without uttering a single word. I watched hours and hours of VCR tapes of them when I was in pre-school. So, I was surprised to see that they still made music.

I never saw the concert in person but after seeing the poster I went online and listened to all of the instrumentals that I had missed over the years and was blown away. Especially by a particular track EXHIBIT 13. Which is full of soft percussion accompanied with indistinct voices that cascade in and out in the background. [Drumbone fades Exhibit 13 short clip begins] These musicians reignited my passion for music in a new way, as this 8 minute song in particular was on repeat all day throughout middle school and when ever I needed to take a break from my brain.

[soft chatter]

I truly believe that music can create and mold a person's mindset and thought process at any time. Additionally, certain types of music can help in the long run with the ability to think clearly. As I have grown and matured, my taste in music has too. I listen to all types of music these days, in multiple different languages. As technology has evolved, I am now able to make complete playlists for different moods, seasons, or even colors.

My brain is loud, sometimes, but music has allowed me to overcome the noise and handle the chaos in loud, obnoxious, overwhelming moments and have it all manifest into a beautiful and mindful mental peace. [Longer clip of Exhibit 13 then fade out] [[end]]