

Rhythm and Brain States

The first sound we hear in the womb is our mother's blood pulsing through her veins. We are born into a rhythmic world, each day embodying the continuous beat of life itself – the heartbeat, the nervous system, the breath.

These miraculous cycles, as well as those of the seasons, the planets, the traversing of worlds, have been mirrored and expressed for millennia through the playing of the drum.

Contemporary shaman and author Neville Drury says: "One thing never ceases to amaze me – that within an hour or so of drumming, ordinary city folk are able to tap extraordinary mythic realities that they never dreamed of".

Modern science is researching and discovering what our ancestors, the ancients, have always known –

that rhythm is a technology for personal and collective transformation.

Scientists such as Melinda Maxfield, Tom Kenyon and others have pioneered research into the powerful effects of rhythm on consciousness.

They found that playing a continuous drum beat at around 4 hertz (cycles per second) synchronises our brain waves from the normal waking state of 14 - 23Hz (the Beta state) down to 4 - 8 Hz (the Theta state).

This Theta level produces a deep sense of relaxation, profound imaging experiences, and certain types of accelerated learning. Theta is also often linked with the phenomena of self healing.

Changing the dominant brain waves from one frequency band to another to induce an altered state of consciousness partly occurs through the phenomenon known as entrainment.

Simply put, entrainment shows us that our brainwaves tend to synchronise to a dominant repetitive rhythmic pattern.

Just as two grandfather clocks with their pendulums swinging at different rates will eventually align with each other, so too will our brain waves and other bodily cycles like the heartbeat and the breath, entrain to an external pulsation, the drum.

Playing a repetitive drum beat also stimulates the part of the brain known as the RAS (Reticular Activating System), increasing our creative right brain activity.

Linear time changes to cyclic time as our spatial intelligence is engaged. Our intuitive self opens, and deep joy and healing can occur.

For millennia, shamans have been using this process to enter into altered states of consciousness to

‘journey’ to other realms.

With focus and training, the repetitious drum beat allows the practitioner to leave the normal Beta (waking) realm of consciousness and enter a profound state in another ‘frequency band’ where he or she can gain access to the wisdom that resides in these other realms.



Shamaness from Tuva, southern Siberia, with her frame drum.

In many shamanic cultures, the practitioner refers to his or her frame drum as their 'horse', which they skillfully ride on their journey to other worlds. They return with new levels of insight and healing for themselves and their community.

The phenomenon of rhythmic entrainment also explains why a magical rhythmic coherence suddenly occurs while drumming with others in a connected way.

Something miraculous kicks in, and we know intuitively that we are not alone in this world. We're rhythmically aligned, something bigger than just ourselves, part of a Divine Oneness. _____ — — —

When a group of drummers gather together with connected loving intention, we have the ability to create conscious change.

How? As well as the effects of rhythm on our own brainwaves, ongoing repetition of rhythmic cycles set up particular cultural 'organising fields'.

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake says that human systems are regulated

by these fields. Magnetic in nature, these organizing fields play a major role in determining our cultural norms and patterns of behaviour.

Like the Hundredth Monkey theory, science has shown that if a new rhythmic pattern is introduced and repeated often enough, it's 'morphic resonance' has a collective effect, and change occurs.

Like shamans and healers throughout the world, the new physics now knows that mind and intent play a deliberate role in our reality.

What that reality looks like is up to us.

*Beat the drum and say no more.
The heart and mind have gone.
The soul has flown to the
Beloved.*

Rumi

Jane Elworthy – 2014

For information on sound healing and sacred pilgrimages, contact Jane

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