

# Healing depression with music therapy

BY V SANKARA

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Music-based interventions can be effective in addressing the symptoms of depression and improve people's mood especially at a time when communities are facing an unprecedented challenge due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to an expert in music therapy from the United States.

President-elect of the American Music Therapy Association, Lori Gooding, said that music plays a significant role in strengthening social bonds where it helps people to feel connected with others amid social distancing to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

"You see examples of people using music to connect in the stories of people singing together at the same time around the world, or of famous musicians giving virtual concerts online.

"While those examples are not music therapy, they do show how individuals use music to connect and improve mood," she told

Bernama in an email reply.

Commenting further, Gooding — a music therapy educator at Florida State University College of Music — said in order for individuals to feel more relaxed by listening to music, it would be important to find music that they prefer and use it regularly, as studies have shown that repeated use improves effectiveness.

"For relaxation, studies have shown that using music that is sedative (not very active), has no words, and is between 60-80 beats per minute, is most effective for relaxation.

"However, what works for each individual varies. Things like the style of music and instruments used can impact effectiveness, as can individual preferences," she said, adding that people should seek qualified music therapist to determine what works best for them.

According to Gooding, in view of the current pandemic, most music therapists are providing music therapy through

teleservices by using a variety of platforms — including Zoom, Google Meet and other platforms.

"There has been some use of social media, but it is used less than other technologies because of privacy and confidentiality considerations," said Gooding, who has been to Malaysia twice in 2016 and 2019 to serve as a keynote speaker at two events sponsored by the Malaysian Society for Music in Medicine.

Commenting on her future projects in Malaysia, she said she will be partnering with Universiti Putra Malaysia soon to develop music therapy programming and education besides working with several hospitals as well as other music professionals to promote music therapy.

Meanwhile, according to well-known Malaysian sitarist, Samuel J Dass, music might work as a therapy for some individuals during these challenging times.

"It is true that many might be going through emotional distress or depression and might find some solace listening to music.



**SITARIST** Samuel J Dass in his recent performance. Photo: Bernama

"Any instrument or even vocal, if rendered tunefully, should have a healing effect," he said.

The president of Swara Community Arts Centre and a

sitar player for 46 years in Malaysia, Sam — as he is fondly known in the music circle — said one can listen to sitar music at any chosen time. — Bernama