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Reading prevents depression in teens

Teenagers who devote more time to reading books are far less likely to suffer from depression than their peers who listen to music.

The study was one of the first to use an intensive "real-life" methodology, called ecological momentary assessment, to study behaviours in real time.

The method helped researchers recognise this large association between exposure to music and depression, said Brian Primack, assistant professor of medicine and paediatrics at University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, who led the study.

The study involved 106 adolescents, 46 of whom were diagnosed with major depressive disorder, the journal Archives of Paediatric and Adolescent Medicine reports.

Researchers called the participants as many as 60 times during five extended weekends over two months and asked them whether they were using any of six types of media: TV or movies, music, video games, Internet, magazines or newspapers, books.

They found that young people who were exposed to the most music, compared to those who listened to music the least, were 8.3 times more likely to be depressed, according to a statement.

However, compared to those with the least time exposed to books, those who read books the most were one-tenth as likely to be depressed.

"It also is important that reading was associated with less likelihood of depression. This is worth emphasising because overall in the US, reading books is decreasing, while nearly all other forms of media use are increasing," concluded Primack.

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