

2020 Tracy Challenge

written by Kathleen M. Pike, PhD

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Yes, folks, it is that time again: the Tracy Challenge. Here are the rules. My friend, Tracy, sends me a list of five things that do not immediately appear to have anything to do with mental health, and my mission is to make them all about mental health. Tracy's Challenge started in 2017 with the [Headlines Challenge](#). In the second round, she upped the ante with the [Home Office Challenge](#), where I was called on to link her office windows, printer, couch, photographs and wrapping paper to mental health.



[Photo Credit](#)

Today, it's about music, but not just any music...!

1. [A Little Night Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#). Who does not know this 1787 composition? Its German title, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, literally translates to "a little night music" but more poetically intends "a little serenade." Mozart wrote most of his work on commission, but the origins of this one have been lost to history. This is where the mental health connection begins. With many psychological disturbances, it is often difficult to remember exactly when and where the symptoms began. It used to be that we thought that psychotherapy depended on uncovering these roots. Today, we know that psychological distress and disorders evolve over time. Thus, many effective therapies today spend more time focused on the here and now, how the distress and disorder are maintained in our current lives, and what we can do to improve our circumstances. Like Mozart's serenade, we don't need to know how or why or for whom he composed his piece, we can rather ask ourselves, how does it make me feel now?

2. [Amazing Grace by Judy Collins](#). This spiritual is beyond beautiful. Perhaps one of the most widely sung hymnals in the English speaking world. It was one of Judy Collins' biggest hits. Written by Englishman John Newton around the same time as Mozart's little serenade, its lyrics are familiar to many. *I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see.* Judy Collins has lived those words. She talks about the experience of feeling lost and broken in her early adult years as she struggled with bulimia nervosa, depression and alcohol addiction. She has written extensively about the despair that consumed her. Judy Collins' arrangement of Amazing Grace is a heartfelt rendering of a journey from despair to recovery.

3. [Truth Hurts by Lizzo](#). This song spent seven weeks as #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2019 and put Time Magazine's Entertainer of the Year, Lizzo, on the map. A classically training flautist, singer and rapper Lizzo is taking on issues of body size, male privilege, gender, sexuality, and the importance of practicing self-care and promoting self-love. I hope her new feminist voice reaches those who find they are not accepted for the truth of who they are. The truth hurts when who we are results in bullying and prejudice - whether because of our body size or gender expression, or some other aspect of self. I don't know if they are linked, but in the UK, there is a foundation called [Truth Hurts](#) focused on addressing self-harming behaviors of youth. The rise in self-harming

behaviors among young people is a serious mental health concern. We have a lot of work to do to better understand what truths are hurting young people, why they are responding with self-harm, and what we can do to intervene.

4. [I Like It by Cardi B, Bad Bunny & J Balvin](#). Okay, so let me just say that I did not know who Cardi B was until this challenge landed in my lap and meanwhile her YouTube video has over a billion views. With a billion views, I am glad to know that she might also raise awareness about [postpartum depression, which she experienced following the birth of her daughter Kulture](#). Much to her surprise, Cardi B described that shortly after Kulture was born “the world was heavy on my shoulders.” Her experience is typical of those who experience [postpartum depression](#), which is common and often goes undiagnosed. Because new mothers think they should only feel happy, postpartum depression can engender shame and interfere with getting help. And I have to say that I like the trap beat and salsa music but am a little shocked by the language (oh no, I am sounding like my mother) of *I like it*. But it will never compete with *Long and Winding Road* for me.

5. [Long and Winding Road by the Beatles](#). Tracy’s favorite Beatles Song, and one of my favorites, too. Ironically, my favorite daughter-in-law, who gave me a crash course on Cardi B so that I could say something above, says that she has never heard *Long and Winding Road*. And although she politely listened, it was obvious that her heart was not in it the way mine was. Really? Really! So what does that tell us about music? It really is true that the tunes of our youth hold a particular power over our emotions for the rest of our lives. This phenomenon even has a name. [Music nostalgia](#). And it is really in our heads. Brain imaging studies show that the songs we listened to endlessly during the drama of adolescence stimulate the pleasure circuitry of our brain, releasing neurochemicals, like dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, to make us feel good. Even decades after our teen years, when we listen to these songs our brains respond with pleasure. Daniel Levitin, author of [This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession](#), brings together research on adolescent neurological, psychological, social and emotional development to explain why I will replay *Long and Winding Road* now and will probably never listen to *I Like It* again.

This was a lot more difficult than I imagined! Thanks for the challenge, Tracy, and just remember [You’ve got a Friend in Me](#).