

## Soothing Sound

### What is Soothing Sound?

- Any sound that makes you feel better as soon as you hear it
- You can use environmental sound, music, or speech as soothing sound

### How can Soothing Sound Help?

- By giving you a sense of relief from tension and stress caused by tinnitus

### When can I use Soothing Sound?

- Any time your tinnitus bothers you

Ernest uses nature sounds from his tabletop sound generator to help him get to sleep. The nature sounds give him a sense of relief from stress and tension caused by tinnitus. The sense of relief makes it easier for him to get to sleep.



Lee plays recordings of Hawaiian music through his iPod while he is at work. The music gives him a sense of relief from stress and tension caused by his tinnitus. The sense of relief makes it easier for him to concentrate on his work.



**Soothing sound**

Photo of HoMedics sound machine shown with permission from HoMedics, Inc.  
Photo of iPod shown with permission from Apple, Inc.

## Examples of Soothing Sound

### Environmental Sound as Soothing Sound

- Ocean waves
- Wind chimes
- Insect sounds
- Masking noise
- Custom tinnitus-relief sounds
- **Any** environmental sound that is soothing to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
<b>Soothing</b>	✓		
<b>Background</b>			
<b>Interesting</b>			

### Music as Soothing Sound

- Classical music
- New Age music
- Relaxation music
- Music with a slow tempo
- Hawaiian music
- **Any** music that is soothing to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
<b>Soothing</b>		✓	
<b>Background</b>			
<b>Interesting</b>			

### Speech as Soothing Sound

- Recordings of relaxation exercises (Imagery, Deep Breathing, etc.)\* (see page 89 in Appendix G)
- Recordings of meditation exercises
- **Any** speech that is soothing to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
<b>Soothing</b>			✓
<b>Background</b>			
<b>Interesting</b>			

**See pages 88-89 in Appendix G for examples of people using soothing sound to manage tinnitus.**

\*The DVD and the CD in the back of this workbook both have recordings of relaxation exercises (Imagery and Deep Breathing).

## Using the Relief Scale for Soothing Sound

The Relief Scale is shown below. It is used to rate how much relief from stress or tension you feel when you listen to a sound.

*No relief* means that there is no change in the stress or tension caused by your tinnitus. *Complete relief* means that, with the sound, the stress or tension caused by the tinnitus is completely gone. Soothing sounds provide a sense of relief from stress or tension caused by tinnitus. You can use the Relief Scale to help you learn which sounds are the most soothing to you. It might take time and patience to find the soothing sounds that do the best job of helping you to feel better.



### Instructions:

- 1 Choose a sound that you think will be soothing. A soothing sound will give you a sense of relief from stress or tension caused by tinnitus. (Tracks 9-14 on the CD in the back of this workbook have sounds that are soothing to many people.)
- 2 Adjust the volume of the sound until you find the level that is most soothing to you.
- 3 Answer the question “When I listen to this sound, how much relief from stress and tension do I feel?”



**0**

No relief



**1**

Slight relief



**2**

Mild relief



**3**

Moderate relief



**4**

Nearly complete relief



**5**

Complete relief

Write down the sound that you listened to	How much relief did the sound give you?					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5

## Background Sound

### What is Background Sound?

- Any sound that is neutral (not soothing and not interesting)
- You can use environmental sound, music, or speech as background sound

### How Can Background Sound Help?

- Our brains are “wired” to notice contrast. There is a lot of contrast between tinnitus and a quiet room. Adding background sound to a quiet room reduces the contrast. The reduced contrast makes it easier to ignore tinnitus.
- Go to pages 19-20 to learn more about *why* background sound makes it easier to ignore tinnitus.



### Background sound

### When can I use Background Sound?

- Any time your tinnitus bothers you

*A constant background of sound can help you notice your tinnitus less often.* Background sound should always be set at a comfortable level. The sound should become a natural part of your day. See Appendices G and H for examples of ways to keep a constant background of sound.



Janet keeps a tabletop fountain running on her desk. The background sound from the fountain makes it easier for her to ignore her tinnitus.



Aynun is using fan noise as background sound to help her concentrate on paying bills.

*Examples of Background Sound*

**Environmental Sound as Background Sound**

- Fan noise
- Waterfall or fountain noise
- Traffic noise
- Wind noise
- Radio static
- Fish tank noise
- **Any** sound that is neutral or pleasant

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
<b>Background</b>	✓		
Interesting			

**Music as Background Sound**

- Classical music
- Guitar or piano music
- New Age music
- Music with lyrics in a foreign language
- “Elevator” music
- **Any** music that is neutral or pleasant

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
<b>Background</b>		✓	
Interesting			

**Speech as Background Sound**

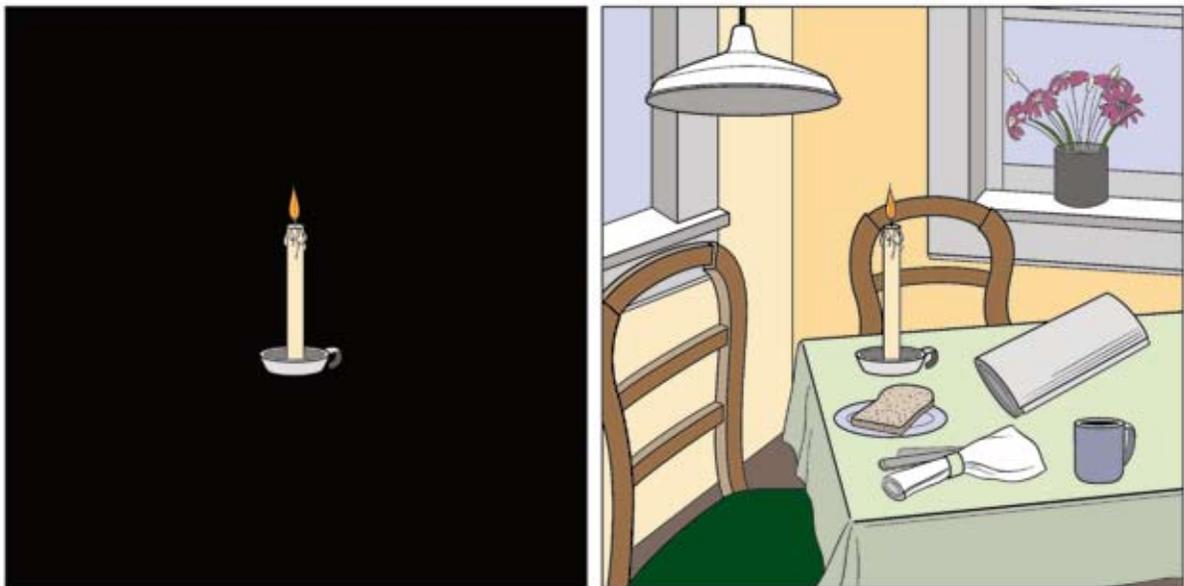
- Recorded crowd noise
- Background television or radio
- **Any** speech that is not interesting to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
<b>Background</b>			✓
Interesting			

*See pages 90-91 in Appendix G for examples of people using background sound to manage their reactions to tinnitus.*

## **How does Contrast Reduction Make it Easier to Ignore Tinnitus?**

Imagine a lit candle in a dark room. The candle is the only light in the room. There is sharp contrast between the bright candle and the dark room. The candle naturally attracts a lot of attention. Next, imagine the same lit candle, but now with the lights on in the room. The contrast between the candle and the room has been reduced. The candle is just as bright as before, but attracts less attention because now there is other light in the room along with the candle.



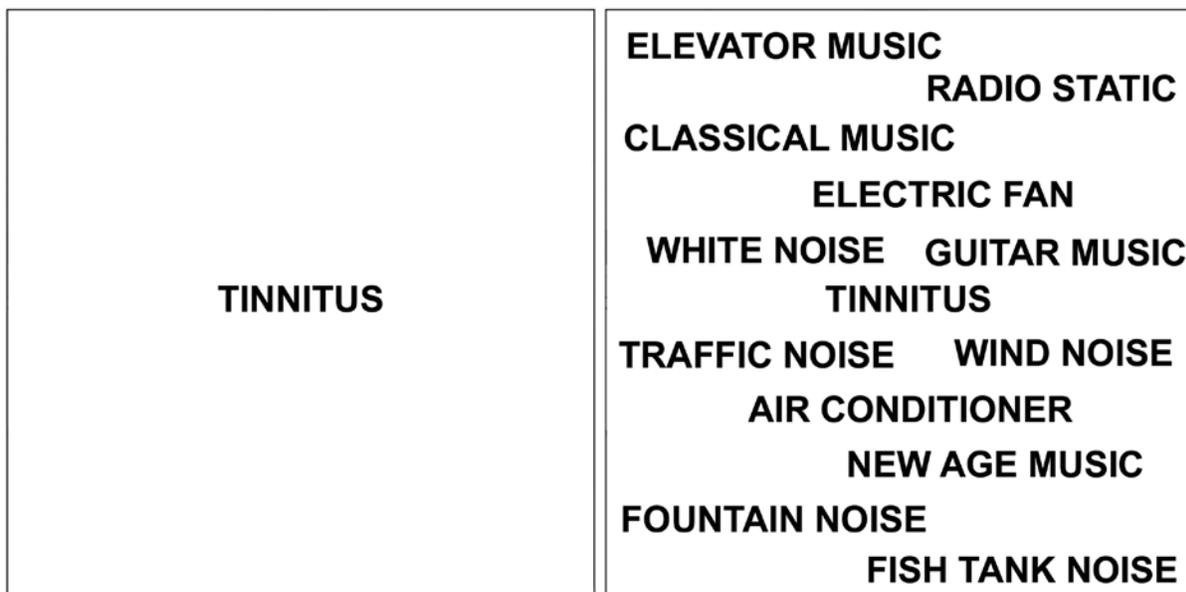
## **Tinnitus and Background Sound**

Contrast reduction also works with sound. The sharp contrast between tinnitus and a quiet room *attracts attention*. Adding sound to the room *reduces the contrast* between the tinnitus and the background. The tinnitus might be just as loud as it was before adding sound to the room. However, *it is easier for the brain to ignore the tinnitus because there is other sound in the room*.



The figure shows how this works. On the left side of the figure “tinnitus” is the only word. When tinnitus is the only word it attracts a lot of attention. On the right side of the figure, there are many words. When there are many words “tinnitus” is easier to ignore, *even though it has not changed*.

Note: Sometimes background sound helps right away. Sometimes it takes weeks or months before you notice that it is helping.



## Tinnitus Contrast Activity



### Instructions:

- 1 Spend a few moments listening to your tinnitus in quiet.
- 2 Now turn on some background sound. The sound should be pleasant or neutral. (Tracks 20-23 on the CD in the back of this workbook have sounds that are neutral to many people.)
- 3 Adjust the volume to a comfortable level.
- 4 Notice the reduced contrast.
- 5 Reducing contrast makes it easier to ignore your tinnitus.

<b>TINNITUS</b>	<p><b>ELEVATOR MUSIC</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>RADIO STATIC</b></p> <p><b>CLASSICAL MUSIC</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ELECTRIC FAN</b></p> <p><b>WHITE NOISE</b>   <b>GUITAR MUSIC</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TINNITUS</b></p> <p><b>TRAFFIC NOISE</b>   <b>WIND NOISE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AIR CONDITIONER</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NEW AGE MUSIC</b></p> <p><b>FOUNTAIN NOISE</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>FISH TANK NOISE</b></p>
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Write down the sound that you listened to	Write any comments you have about using this sound as background sound

## Interesting Sound

### **What is Interesting Sound?**

- Sound that keeps your attention
- Sound that you actively listen to
- You can use environmental sound, music, or speech as interesting sound

### **How can Interesting Sound Help?**

- By helping you shift your attention away from your tinnitus

### **When can Interesting Sound Help?**

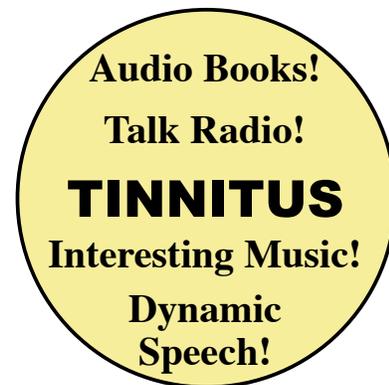
- When you do not need to concentrate on something else
- When you want to relax or sleep\*

\*Note: Interesting sound can be a powerful way to get your mind off of your tinnitus. This helps some people relax enough to get to sleep. It might not be helpful for others. Be open to using sound in surprising or unusual ways to manage your tinnitus!

James is listening to an audiobook on his MP3 player. Listening to an audiobook helps him shift his attention away from his tinnitus.



Patrick is talking on the telephone with a friend. Talking on the telephone helps him keep his mind off of his tinnitus.



Interesting sound

*Examples of Interesting Sound*

**Environmental Sound as Interesting Sound**

**Active listening to:**

- Whale sounds
- Bird calls
- Morse code
- Forest sounds at night
- **Any** environmental sound that is interesting to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
Background			
Interesting	✓		

**Music as Interesting Sound**

**Active listening to:**

- Song lyrics
- Various instruments in a piece of music
- Live musical performance
- **Any** music that is interesting to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
Background			
Interesting		✓	

**Speech as Interesting Sound**

**Active listening to:**

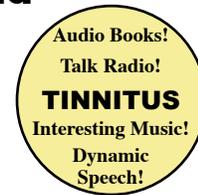
- A friend
- Community lecture
- Audiobook
- Talk radio
- Podcast
- **Any** speech that is interesting to you

	Environmental	Music	Speech
Soothing			
Background			
Interesting			✓

*See pages 91-92 in Appendix G for examples of people using interesting sound to manage their reactions to tinnitus.*

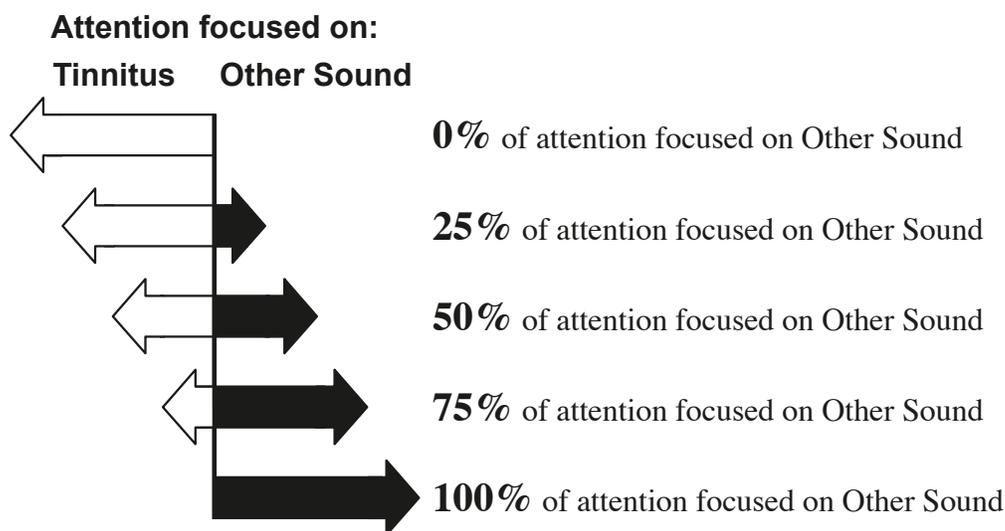
## Using the Attention Scale for Interesting Sound

The Attention Scale is shown below. It is used to rate how well a sound keeps your attention off of your tinnitus. You can use the Attention Scale to figure out which sounds work best for keeping your attention. It may take time and patience to find sounds that do the best job of shifting your thoughts away from your tinnitus.



### Instructions:

- 1 Choose a sound that you think will keep your attention. (Tracks 15-19 on the CD in the back of this workbook have sounds that are interesting to many people.)
- 2 Listen to the sound for at least 1 minute.
- 3 Choose the percent of attention focused on the sound while listening to it.



Write down the sound that you listened to	How much of your attention was focused on the "Other Sound"?				
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%