Understanding how music is connected with emotion can be informative for the performer who is interested in moving the listener. But why do so many of us like music that makes us feel emotional? The last two decades of music psychology research has seen the development of a strong interest in emotion-in-music research, and raised some matters that are controversial and unresolved. For example, is liking and preference itself a kind of emotional response? Is it possible to explain mechanistically an attraction to music that makes us feel negative emotions such as sadness and grief? One solution to these questions is proposed by applying principles of cognitive psychology. I will argue that emotions can be felt without real-life displeasure through the activation of a 'dissociation node'. This node switches off pain circuits, allowing many other nodes to be activated, without negative consequences. As formulated by Colin Martindale, activation of more nodes generates more pleasure, as well as associated experiences such as ‘awe’ and ‘absorption’. This explanation points to a caveat regarding how we can better understand both preference and emotion in music: According to the linguistic and philosophical work by Colombetti and Charland, the two terms can be conceptually teased apart by being thought of as 'affect valence' and 'emotion valence' respectively. Positive affect response (enjoyment, preference, awe etc.) to music is explained by the cognitive principle of dissociation, while negative (sadness, grief) and positive (joy, excitement, serenity) emotions are the specific emotion nodes that are activated in the dissociated (music listening) state. Implications for music research are discussed.