

Why Music Works in Dementia Care

Familiar music is used as a trigger for memory in dementia care. Triggers spark memories from the past and help people with dementia find a sense of self and is often attached to emotions connected to experiences that have been important and meaningful.

There are a number of reasons why music is a natural choice in helping people with dementia.

1. Music supports and stimulates memory.
2. Personalized music may reduce agitated or combative behaviors.
3. Individualized music helps to restructure identity and preserve the self.
4. Music is a means of expression and non-verbal communication connecting with emotions and feelings.
5. Music is an aesthetic experience reintroducing beauty and the spiritual life.
6. Music may have a carryover effect which impacts connections or appropriate behaviors for an extended period of time.
7. Music can be implemented by caregivers.
8. Music-making reaches psychosocial needs of persons with dementia like comfort, attachment, inclusion, occupation.
9. Music makes connections in every domain.
10. Music contributes to quality of life by enhancing socialization.

It is the inner life of music which can still make contact with their inner lives, with them; which can awaken the hidden, seemingly extinguished soul; and evoke a wholly personal response of memory, associations, feelings, images, a return of thought and sensibility, an answering identity.

- Dr. Oliver Sacks, neurologist



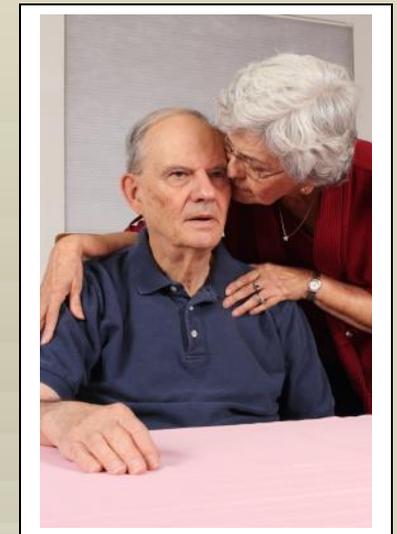
Tips for caregivers using music in dementia care

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SMILE

Tips for caregivers using music in dementia care



Caring for the whole person with music

SMILE

*Tips for caregivers using music
in dementia care*

Sing
Make music visits
Individualize music
Look for music opportunities & resources
Evaluate

Music is a simple, but effective activity that professional, volunteer or family caregivers can do with persons with dementia. Research has shown there are at least 10 benefits of using caregiver-implemented music for persons with dementia.

- Little or no cost involved
- Natural expansion of the caregiver role
- Applicable in any kind of care setting
- Used by any kind of caregiver
- Adaptable to suit the individual caregiver or PWD
- Increased cooperation by PWD
- Enhanced caregiving relationship
- Improved caregiver's motivation and reduced burnout
- Can be co-ordinated with any music therapy program
- Reduction of psychotropic drugs

Sing

Sing or hum during care procedures. In situations of care, singing means connecting. Songs are a means of engagement. Choose a "home song", one that is familiar, meaningful and enjoyed together. Keep coming back to that song. Examples of home songs are *You Are My Sunshine*, *Lean On Me*, *Happy Together*.

Make music visits

A musical visit can be done 3-5 times per week lasting 8-10 minutes each visit. Repetition of music from visit to visit is a very good thing. Structure of the visit includes a tune for greeting, some movement, singing a song, playing an instrument, and a tune for closing.

Greeting: Hello Mrs. G. How are you today?

Move: Dance or sway to *You are my sunshine*

Sing: Let me call you sweetheart OR Take me out to the ballgame OR Home Song OR

Instrument: tactile and feel vibrations – egg

Closing: Good-bye Mrs. G. Have a wonderful day.

Individualize music

Individualized music is used to modify responsive behaviors i.e. wandering, combativeness, agitation, bath/mealtime or for pleasure, cognitive stimulation, recollecting. Select individualized music based on preferences of person with dementia. Be specific i.e. title, artist, vocal or instrumental version. You may need to interview a family member who is knowledgeable about the person. Use a CD player or mp3 player to deliver music at appropriate volume. Headphones may be necessary – music that is pleasing to one person may be annoying to another.

Look for music opportunities & resources

Caregivers need to be on the lookout for music opportunities and resources in their area. For example, day programs may offer musical programs like sing-alongs, choirs or drumming circles. Long term care facilities may provide sensory stimulation or music therapy services. Snoezelen equipment or rooms often include music as part of the sensory experience. Alzheimer's Society chapters are promoting the iPod project and may have music programs to be a part of. Specific resources like Recollections may be an excellent resource for individualized programming for sensory stimulation or reminiscence.

Evaluate

Monitor the person you are caring for while music is used. Notice and remember responses. This will help you select music that is appropriate, appreciated and beneficial. Write down responses according to this checklist.

Checklist

- Facial expression
- Body posture
- Eye contact
- Sounds or words
- Initiation, acceptance, resistance or refusal of physical contact
- Agitation
- Reaction to live instruments
- Reaction to singing
- Breathing
- Movement

