



MUSIC THERAPY

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“Where words fail, music speaks.”
- Hans Christian Andersen

Can music therapy improve the condition of people with Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia, affecting patients over the age of 65. The disease causes changes in the brain, which initially cause mild memory issues that can go undetected for years. In later stages of the condition, patients may not be able to talk with others or seem aware of things happening around them.

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but research into new treatments shows that some complementary therapies, such as music therapy, can offer hope, and we should focus on the ways to improve a patient's quality of life.

Various studies have shown a positive effect of music therapy on Alzheimer's patients. It's clear that music can reduce agitation and improve behavioral problems that are common in the middle stages of the disease.

Even if verbal communication with Alzheimer's sufferers has become difficult, music can provide ways to connect with them.

It has been observed that, regardless of the state of the disease, also in the late stages of Alzheimer's disease, a person may be able to tap a beat or sing the lyrics of a childhood song.

The review published in March 2019 in *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, has found that music therapy can lead to improvements in behavioural, cognitive, and social functioning - helping allay anxiety and depression and reducing the use of anti-anxiety and antipsychotic medication in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.



In other words that means that for many people with Alzheimer's dementia, the right kind of music therapy can provide comfort, joy, and connection during a frightening and lonely time.

Music therapy does not simply mean listening to or creating music for entertainment; it is a field of healthcare. Listening to music, dancing or singing all of these can give people with dementia many benefits, such as socializing, moving, breathing, and relaxing, for example. Singing and music interventions can even improve immune response. So use it wisely. For example, try an upbeat playlist in the morning to increase energy for the day. In the late afternoon, try a more relaxing playlist that will encourage feelings of peace and comfort to help with any anxiety, wandering, or insomnia.

Music therapy

A study published in September 2017 in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry found that nursing homes that used music and memory saw significant improvements in dementia's behavioral symptoms as well as significant reductions in patients' anxiety and antipsychotic medications.

While music can be listened to by everyone, music therapy is provided by music specialists.

PRACTICAL TIPS

First, try to identify music that's familiar and enjoyable to the person. If possible, let the person choose the music.

Second, choose music that is not interrupted by commercials, which can cause unnecessary interruptions and confusion.

Third, remember that music has the power to influence people's mood. For instance, a calm piece of music can help create a calm atmosphere, while a more rhythmic piece of music helps awaken energies, encourage increased physical activity (e.g. through dancing), strengthen the spirit of joy and recall happy memories.

Fourth, try to avoid sensory overload and overstimulation. An effective way to do this is to focus attention on eliminating competing sounds.

You can easily do this by closing windows and doors and turning off the TV. Also, make sure the music volume is not too loud. Playing music loudly while talking or hitting pots and pans while preparing breakfast may not be the best idea.



“THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THOSE WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE”



Keep an eye and ear out for how the person reacts to music as you play it. You'll be able to tell if they like it or not, and if they want to engage with it almost immediately. Smiling, clapping and even humming can mean they like the song and are engaged. Looking away may mean that he or she does not like it or is not ready to engage in music right now, so be respectful.

And remember - music is therapy for everyone, not just people who have Alzheimer's disease.



“The music is in the air.
Take as much as you want.”
- EDWARD ELGAR

Related reeaserch:

Music Therapy for Alzheimer's

- The effect of background stimulative music on behavior in Alzheimer's patients; Ziv N1, Granot A, Hai S, Dassa A, Haimov I. J Music Ther. 2007 Winter;44(4):329-43. Abstract
- Music as a memory enhancer in patients with Alzheimer's disease; Nicholas R.Simmons-SternabAndrew E.BudsonabBrandon A.Alllyab. Neuropsychologia Volume 48, Issue 10, August 2010, Pages 3164-3167. Article

Referral links:

- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/art-music#:~:text=Studies%20have%20shown%20music%20may,to%20a%20song%20from%20childhood>
- <https://www.arborcompany.com/blog/music-and-alzheimers-benefits-of-music-therapy>

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