



Music - the language of the soul

Music is a universal language that links people from every culture. Its virtues range from celebration to healing. Research on the impact of music and the brain provides evidence that the memory for music can stay intact, even in the face of diseases like Alzheimer's disease. More importantly, we are learning that music can stimulate multiple regions of the brain that draw upon emotion, memory, movement and language. Studies involving the use of music in people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias have demonstrated some profound effects including increased socialization, improved speech and memory-thinking abilities. In addition music can reduce depression, minimize agitation and help with problem behaviors.

Music therapists teach us that music heard from our teen-to young-adult years (18-30) are often the most robust in those with dementia. It is during those years that we experience life-defining moments and there is usually a song or melody that becomes tied to these memories. It is long-term memories that are deeply rooted and the last to fade in Alzheimer's disease. So, it makes sense that tapping into those "musical memories" that can stimulate thoughts, words, memories and emotions can improve the daily lives of people with dementia.

There are many ways to make music come alive. The first thing to do is to identify the type of music the person enjoys best. Begin by sitting down and making a list of favorite music including popular music, songs from musicals, hymns, holiday, and patriotic songs. If the person is not able to recall specific music or songs, you can look at lists of songs by year available on the Internet. Examples include: Songs by year from 1940 on www.borbbost.com; Music and trivia from 1950 on www.oldiesmusic.com; and Wikipedia.org, provide extensive lists of songs and artists by year. You can play old albums and even download music to customize a list of favorite songs. A Music Preferences Worksheet is available from BAI to assist in identifying musical preferences.

Singing to, or with the person can be both fun and meaningful. Most people feel more comfortable when singing along with a recorded song or in a group. Live performances can have added benefits for a meaningful outing. These can be as simple as free concerts in the community or an outing to the symphony or other performing arts. Movement to music can include clapping along, tapping a foot to the rhythm and dancing. Dancing can promote intimacy and have additional benefits of getting the heart rate up! Listening to music as a quiet activity can provide rest and nourishment for the brain all at one time. Oliver Sacks, MD, noted author and neurologist sums it up best: "Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears – it is a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear. But for many of my neurological patients, music is even more –it can provide access, even when no medication can, to movement, to speech, to life. For them, music is not a luxury, but a necessity."

Music Preference

Identifying favorite music may appear to be a daunting task however, begin to take these simple steps and you will begin to hone in on those favorite songs.

- ◆ What was the person's history with music?
 - Did she/he play an instrument, sing, dance, listen to music?
 - How often, where, when and with whom?
- ◆ What is the person's preferred genre?
 - Country, Folk, Pop, Big Band, Instrumental, Swing, Classical, Jazz, Gospel
- ◆ When does the person currently listen to music?
 - While relaxing, exercising, eating, sleeping, getting dressed?
- ◆ Does music change/improve the person's:
 - Mood, activity level, emotions, movement, focus, task completion?
- ◆ Can you list favorite song titles and artists?
- ◆ Use the Web sites listed in the newsletter to obtain top songs by year
- ◆ Download/copy favorite songs onto a CD for easy use
 - This is often an activity that grandchildren would love to do!
- ◆ Begin to use music in a more purposeful way each day
 - Listen, sing or move to music twice a day for about 30 minutes
 - Instead of watching TV before bed, begin to listen to quiet music
 - Avoid using radio stations for music as commercials will interrupt the flow
- ◆ Evaluate how favorite music is impacting the person



“Ask the Expert”
Jan Dougherty, RN, MS

Dear Jan:

The evening hours have become more challenging for my mom. She often becomes more confused and agitated and I can't seem to find any way to settle her down. I need some new ideas!

Signed: Running Out of Steam

Dear Out of Steam:

Evening hours are often the most challenging for people with dementia. Fatigue is a culprit and by late afternoon and evening, most people are tired particularly if they have not had adequate rest periods. Begin by introducing more frequent rest periods throughout the day. This does not necessarily mean taking a nap, but may use a quiet activity. Music is an easily accessible way to provide relaxation and meaning. It can also be used in a purposeful way to promote rest. Research on the use of music in care facilities has been shown to minimize evening agitation. Begin by:

- ◆ Determining the time of day your mom is likely to become agitated.
- ◆ Try to get her to a quieter place at home and even dim the lighting a bit.

- ◆ Have some quiet music playing that may be her favorite artist or genre. Avoid using quiet listening music that includes animal or nature noises as she may think it is actually in the home.
- ◆ Invite your mom to sit in a favorite chair and join her to help her connect with the music. You may also want to provide her with a cup of tea and cookie.
- ◆ Allow her to listen to the music for about 30 minutes.
- ◆ During the daytime hours, turn up the lights or open the blinds and allow her to get up and move to another activity.
- ◆ During the evening hours, you may want to leave the lighting low which may promote a readiness for bedtime.

Give your mom some time to try this routine using the music that works for her. Use these short musical “time-outs” as a way to promote rest and calm for your mom. The predictable pattern may well be substituted for her agitation. Be sure not to play continuous music throughout the day as the music will lose its purpose and effectiveness in minimizing her agitation.

What’s New in the Library

Connecting Through Music with People with Dementia: A Guide for Caregivers (2009) is written by music therapist Robin Rio to teach caregivers how to use melody or rhythm to connect and stimulate memories. This user-friendly book teaches how even simple sounds and movements can engage and promote enjoyment and relaxation in people with dementia. The book provides practical advice on using music, including a songbook that suggests a wide range of popular song choices. It also includes a chapter for caregivers to incorporate music as part of looking after themselves.

Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain (2008) by noted author and neurologist Oliver Sacks explores the place music occupies in the brain and how it affects the human condition. Dr. Sacks describes numerous unique experiences of his patients, musicians and everyday people. The final chapter focuses on the role of music in those affected by dementia.

Beacon Bits

COMPASS Class - A 90-minute introduction to understanding Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia being held on Oct. 29, from 4 p.m.—5 p.m. at Banner Alzheimer’s Institute 901 E. Willetta Street in 3rd Floor Conference Room.

FINDING Help Class—A 90-minute class to assist caregivers in understanding the importance of planning ahead by arranging legal, financial and medical decisions for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other related dementias. The class is being held on Oct. 21, from 10 a.m.—11:30 a.m. at Banner Alzheimer’s Institute 901 E. Willetta Street in 3rd Floor Conference Room.

Registration is required for both the classes listed above; please register ASAP as classes fill up quickly. Contact Veronica Ellis at (602) 239-6850 or veronica.ellis@bannerhealth.com.

A Night to Remember is conducted by the Women’s Council of the Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, a group of dedicated business and community leaders united by a common goal: To raise awareness and funds in support of the Institute’s mission. To end Alzheimer’s before another generation is lost. Location: Olive and Ivy, Scottsdale Waterfront, 7135 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale, Ariz. Cost is \$150 per person. Casual Chic Attire. Enjoy cocktails, gourmet tasting and a silent auction. The event benefits Banner Alzheimer’s Institute. For more information, call **Lori Schrock** (602) 839-6934.

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.