

5 TIPS for caregivers

MUSIC & MEMORY PROGRAM

We all have our favorite songs. The one that comes on the radio and you have to sing along. Or another that just makes you smile, reminding you of a favorite family activity. But did you know that our brains are hard-wired to connect music with long-term memory? Even for individuals with dementia, music can elicit deep emotional recall. Favorite songs associated with important events can trigger memories of the experience. This is why the Music & Memory program is so important! Learn a little more about the program and how it can improve quality of life.

1 What is Music & Memory?

The Music & Memory program is a personalized music system that provides therapeutic benefits to participants by providing an individualized playlist. Dan Cohen, a social worker in New York, began the program as a way to maximize quality of life for individuals with memory impairments. Musical memory is profoundly linked to emotions, and these memories are stored deep in the brain. While Alzheimer's damages the ability to recall facts and details, it does not destroy these lasting connections between a favorite song and memory of an important life event, no matter how long ago. When individuals suffering from dementia hear a melody connected with a meaningful memory, they can reawaken. The key to the program is the personalized playlist.

2 Who should use the program?

Though initially started with individuals in the later stages of dementia in a nursing home setting, the program has benefits for a wide audience. Almost anyone can benefit from a personalized playlist! A favorite song can help calm someone who is agitated or anxious. Familiar melodies can help reawaken participants in the later stages of the disease. If the person is hesitant to use the iPod or headphones, play music in the room for them to enjoy. The program is highly adaptable, and can be used with participants throughout the course of the disease.

3 When is Music & Memory used?

Participants can listen to their iPods throughout the day. There is no set time or schedule for using Music & Memory, so it can be used as much as the individual will benefit! Music can even be used in setting up a familiar routine at home. Specific favorite songs can be used at mealtimes, or as a distraction during tasks such as showering or brushing teeth. As one caregiver described of caring for his father, "I

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sang or played Frank Sinatra's 'In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning' to wake him up. Instead of being lost and confused in the mornings, as often happens for people with Alzheimer's, the song made him realize where he was and who my mother and I were."

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4 Where is Music & Memory Used?

Music & Memory is now used in more than 1,000 locations in North America, and in a dozen care facilities in 8 other countries. It has grown very quickly since its inception in 2006, due to the profound effect the program has for both participants and staff. Quality of life is improved for all involved as participants are happier, and caregivers can more easily provide needed care. IMCC began the Music & Memory Program in 2012 and many participants have utilized their own personal iPod and playlist. The program keeps growing as new participants enter the day center, and their family members help us identify their musical preferences. The Music & Memory concept can easily be used at home as well. Families can identify their loved one's musical preferences, and begin to utilize a personalized playlist at home too!

5 Why should someone use the program?

Grounded in extensive neuroscience research about how our brains respond to music, the program has been tested and proven in long term care facilities throughout the US and Canada. Staff from these facilities has said that this program is often life-changing for everyone involved. The program has shown increases in cooperation and attention, reduced resistance to care, reduced agitation and sundowning, and enhanced engagement and socialization. Best of all, it increases quality of life for those participating.

Want to Learn More?

Take a look at our use of the program at InsightMCC.org, learn more about Music & Memory at musicandmemory.org, or see the article in the July-August 2015 issue of AARP Bulletin!



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Need more information? Check out our caregiver education programs at InsightMCC.org.