

Music Training

Providing comfort for your loved one





Create a space that promotes relaxation and attention.

Begin by eliminating distractions. For example, turning off the TV or, if in a facility, closing the door to reduce unwanted noise. Prior to starting the music, make sure your loved one is comfortable and their basic needs are met (check if they are hungry or thirsty, if they need to be repositioned or go to the bathroom).

Music can be comforting no matter what stage your loved one is at. Hearing is the last sense to go, so your voice and familiar music can continue to provide emotional and physical comfort.

What type of music should I play?

Using recorded music with your loved one has many benefits. It can help increase alertness when needed (eating, social engagement) and it can encourage relaxation if they are feeling anxious.

1. First, determine their preferred music. Research shows the most nostalgic and memorable music comes from our teenage years and early 20s. The music that may be relaxing to you may not be relaxing to your loved one. Consider using music that brings them comfort.
2. Be aware of your loved one's physical state (Examples: relaxed, alert, energized, anxious, etc.) and try to match the music to support their needs.

For example, if they are feeling anxious, use slower tempo, simple melody music. If they appear fatigued, moderate/up tempo songs can assist with increased arousal.

3. Watch for physical responses from your loved one. Music can be over stimulating or trigger negative thoughts/memories. Discontinue or change the music if your loved one displays an undesirable response such as a grimace or tears.
4. Be aware of the volume and match it to your loved one's needs.

Nature Sounds

If your loved one enjoyed being outside, use nature sounds. You can purchase CDs or download an app on your smart device that can play ocean, rain or bird sounds.





What to say or do during the music?

1. Simply listen, be present and sit with your loved one. By being present, you are providing comfort and a loving presence.
2. Encourage reminiscing or sharing of memories. Music elicits memories from different times in our lives. Ask open ended questions to encourage reminiscing and life review. Reflecting on our past provides meaning and purpose, improving our quality of life.
3. Massage or hold your loved one's hand. Your touch is powerful, and it can be thought of as a way to transmit and receive energy from one person to another. When your touch conveys affection or happiness, you give positive energy to the person you touch. You can also feel the positive energy coming from another person who touches you when they give love and happiness to you.
4. Talk about the music. Engage in discussion about the lyrics, singer and instruments for fun stimulating conversation.
5. Dance with your loved one. If they are chair or bedbound, gentle swaying of the hands can provide a positive interaction and elicit fond memories of dancing.
6. Encourage singing! Singing with your loved one can be very comforting and help reduce anxiety.
7. Combine coordinated breathing techniques to enhance relaxation. For example: breathing in through your nose for four counts, and out through your mouth for eight counts. You can also try imagery such as: breathing in peace and exhaling tension.

If your loved one has memory impairment:

- Sing to them without the recording to allow for adaptation to the tempo.
- Use gentle touch or body gestures to encourage them to sing with you.
- Sing SLOWLY! It may be harder for them to process the words – follow their lead – repetition is key!
- Leave open ended phrases to encourage them to finish the lyrics, i.e., “You are my _____.”
(sunshine)
- Avoid the phrase “do you remember when?” Instead share the memories with them, give details and reflect on the positive experience you shared.
- Do not attempt to engage patient in a sing-along activity if they are eating or drinking (this is a potential choking hazard).
- If they are not actively engaging, do not force your loved one to sing. Simply listening is beneficial for their well-being.
- Play music for only 30 minutes at a time. Background music for longer than 30 minutes becomes habituating and loses its benefits, or it can become overstimulating.

If you have any questions or concerns about using music with your loved one, do not hesitate to reach out to one of our board-certified music therapists at 772.567.5551.



For more information, please contact us at
772.567.5551
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