

MUSIC & MIND

music therapy in dementia care + beyond

by: Alexa Goldfarb

WHY MUSIC?

Music is a unique tool that excites nearly every part of the brain,¹ from auditory to motor and emotion networks!



Music can activate the...

- hippocampus (memory center)
- amygdala (processes emotion)
- Orbitofrontal cortex² (decision-making)
- temporal lobes (auditory processing)
- ... While also influencing levels of...
 - epinephrine (triggers "fight or flight")
 - interleukin-6 (associated with stress levels)
- + more (incl. the cerebellum⁴ and dopamine pathways³)!

WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

"[T]he clinical & evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized [non-musical] goals" (American Music Therapy Association - www.musictherapy.org)

• With this definition, music therapy can take many forms based on individual goals, including:

- ★ **ACTIVE MUSIC THERAPY:** clinical approach where therapists and patients participate in creating music (ex: clapping, improvisation)
- RECEPTIVE MUSIC THERAPY:** therapist-curated music listening sessions (emphasis on emotional response)
- ★ **INDIVIDUALIZED:** personalized therapy based on individual musical preferences
- NON-INDIVIDUALIZED:** (could be within group music therapy) general music therapy/ listening not selected based on preferences
- GENERAL MUSIC INTERVENTIONS:** * separate from music therapy * the use of music to improve well-being, without a music therapist

IN DEMENTIA CARE: WHO ELSE?

music can help with a number of dementia symptoms:

1. **Cognitive decline** - familiar music can evoke autobiographical memories, improving cognitive functioning
2. **Sundowning** - patients who listened to music in the evening exhibited less confusion⁷
3. **Agitation** - music therapy can decrease agitation disruptiveness + increase compliance on tasks⁸

In general, music can activate the brain, promote social bonding, and be an emotional outlet,

BUT it can also...

- improve verbal communicative skills in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder,⁹ build focus and structure for individuals with ADHD,¹⁰ and reduce anxiety⁹

Some individuals who lose the ability to speak can still sing!

HOW DO I ACCESS MUSIC THERAPY?

Based on conversations with licensed therapists, the best ways to utilize music in your own life are to:

- 1★ check if your insurance covers music therapy → working with a trained therapist is most effective
- 2★ find local music therapists at www.psychologytoday.com
3. Use YouTube / streaming services to make a playlist of your favorite songs. Experiment with the times of day you listen, in order to boost your mood → the goal is to listen with PURPOSE!
4. Utilize free/ local music classes (Mommy & Me, YMCA programming, or YouTube resources) when available

THE POWER OF MUSIC THERAPY



Music is a powerful tool which professionals can use to help people of all ages understand their emotions and improve quality of life.

EVERYBODY

dementia patients



Stressed high schoolers



Sources:

1. <https://magazine.hms.harvard.edu/articles/how-music-resonates-brain>
2. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3233/JAD-150928>
3. <https://journals.lww.com/ccmjournal/pages/articleviewer.aspx?year=2007&issue=12000&article=00005&type=Abstract>
4. <https://hms.harvard.edu/news-events/publications-archive/brain/music-brain>
5. <https://www.musictherapy.org/about/musictherapy/>
6. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychiatry/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2021.643234/fullref=popusgar.com&=psv_p_48772574_t_w
7. <https://www.trualta.com/resources/blog/the-role-of-music-therapy-in-managing-sundowning-can-soothing-sounds-help/>
8. https://www.academia.edu/14881731/Music_as_Therapy
9. <https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/32/1/1/27/6378748>
10. https://www.additudemag.com/music-therapy-for-adhd-how-rhythm-builds-focus/?rstid=AtmB00oP5FaqkqgqstwdG64euZ_tezKbxMG7q8N6AwicCVk01YNWD3