

5 WAYS TO USE MUSIC

Music is a powerful tool in dementia care – from entertainment to activity to therapy, it can help with daily tasks, provide meaningful stimulation and health and wellbeing benefits. Use our handy tips from experts and celebrities to make music a part of your day.



MOOD CHANGER

Grace Meadows, Music for Dementia Campaign Director and music therapist

Music is our emotions put into sound. It sets off a series of chemical reactions in our brains, altering how we feel about ourselves and the world around us and helps to manage and regulate behaviour. Use familiar up-tempo music to lift mood and distract, or soothing music to calm and reassure.



MAKING NEW MEMORIES

Catherine Loveday, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience

When we think of music, memories are often evoked. However, when we experience music, both old and new, in the here and now, we're also making new memories. For family and carers of someone living with dementia, that's happening across generations and those memories can be treasured for many years to come – remembering the person you care for through music, for who they are beyond their dementia.



PHYSICALLY CONNECTING

Sophie Scott CBE, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience

Music that we love affects us – emotionally, physically, spiritually. Music can reach parts of the brain that are unaffected by dementia, and be a source of connection, reduce stress, and help improve everyone's mood. Ways to enhance this can include moving to the music – especially dancing together, where possible. Music and affectionate touch (like a hug) are both ways of expressing and communicating love, compassion and comfort.



CREATING CONVERSATION

Lauren Laverne, broadcaster and Music for Dementia Ambassador

Music is a conversation and there are many ways we can have those musical conversations. Be it with words, through eye contact and gestures, singing along to songs or listening to favourite music together, these can all spark moments for connection. Music is a powerful means of communication – use it as your bond to enable people to share and express feelings and emotions beyond the spoken word.



EXERCISE & MOVEMENT

Dame Arlene Phillips, choreographer, theatre director, TV presenter, and former dancer

We are musical beings, with rhythm built into us through our heartbeats. Whatever our age, music increases motivation, reduces feelings of fatigue, helps motor and movement co-ordination. The link between our auditory and motor neurons means our bodies and brains respond to what we hear. Choose music that motivates you to help you incorporate exercise and movement into each day.

HOW TO USE MUSIC

Practical tips for carers for every day, whether at home or in a care setting



VOLUME AND HEARING

- ✓ Check whether you are playing music at the **right volume**. Ask if the level is ok – too loud can overwhelm, too quiet can frustrate. Try to **reduce competing noises**.
- ✓ Think about positioning. How far away is the speaker from listeners? Consider moving speakers or people to accommodate **different hearing levels**.
- ✓ **Hearing loss and impairment** is often associated with dementia. If someone appears to be having difficulties with hearing, help them get it tested.
- ✓ Dementia impacts each person uniquely and, depending on the type of dementia, can affect how they **process and hear music**. Previously pleasurable sounds may no longer be enjoyable.



WHICH MUSIC?

- ✓ Musical memories endure when much else is lost – music **familiar and personalised** will be most effective. If possible, ask friends and family to suggest music.
- ✓ Find out popular songs, TV theme tunes or music from **key moments** in the person's life.
- ✓ Pay attention to their **responses** – see what other music this might suggest they would like.



TIMING

- ✓ What are the **best times of day** for music to aid you and/or engage someone you care for?
- ✓ Start the day by playing music that **motivates** and helps to **stimulate** and invigorate.
- ✓ In the evening, help **wind down** by playing music to relax to.



PERSONAL CARE

- ✓ Use music while delivering personal care to provide a **useful distraction**, making it less embarrassing or awkward while putting some fun into a daily routine.
- ✓ Can you find a **favourite song** that you can both sing to get dressed to or wash hair to?



ROUTINE AND RITUAL

- ✓ Use music to help **create routine** and familiarity e.g. favourite music for mealtimes to support nutrition. Try different genres and artists to see which work best.
- ✓ **Ease transitions** with music or singing to provide a bridge between different activities in the day or when moving from room to room.



TOGETHERNESS

- ✓ Try to listen together to create a **shared experience** and find your way of connecting – hold hands, tap your feet, sing along or dance together. Encourage movement if you can.
- ✓ Perhaps **talk about the music** or ask a few questions when you see someone responding to it.