



# Tapping the Unlimited Potential of Music

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I worry that the person who thought up Muzak may be thinking up something else.

~ Lily Tomlin

Nothing separates the generations more than music. By the time a child is eight or nine, he has developed a passion for his own music that is even stronger than his passions for procrastination and weird clothes.

~ Bill Cosby

The Irish gave the bagpipes to the Scots as a joke, but the Scots haven't got the joke yet.

~ Oliver Herford

# Overview

- What makes music such a perfect tool in dementia care?
- What is Music Therapy?
- How can caregivers use music to connect with people with dementia?

# I. What makes music such a perfect tool in dementia care?

*Music is...*

- Pervasive
- Social
- Flexible

*“Music is..” continued*

- Stimulating
- Energizing

“You can’t possibly hear the last movement of Beethoven’s Seventh and go slow.”

~ Oscar Levant, explaining his way out of a speeding ticket.

*“Music is..” continued*

- Calming/relaxing
- Structured, predictable, and reality-based
- Emotive

*“Music is..” continued*

- Memorable

“Persons with Alzheimer’s disease have not really lost their personality or their memory, they have just lost access to it”

~ Oliver Sacks

“Realize that time can ‘dissolve’ and a reminder can trigger the person to re-enter an old experience.”

~ Carol Bowlby Sifton, 2004

*“Music is..” continued*

- Communicative

- “For elderly people with dementia, although verbal communication fails, we can offer contexts of expression and understanding where gesture, movement and vocalization make communicative sense.”

~ Aldridge, 2000

## II. What is Music Therapy?

- *A Definition:*

Music Therapy is a systematic process of intervention wherein the therapist helps the client to promote health, using music experiences and the relationships that develop through them as dynamic forces of change.

~ Bruscia, 1998

*What is MT? continued*

- Training Programs in Canada
- Creative Music Therapy (the Nordoff-Robbins approach)
  - The “Music Child”
  - A focus on improvisation

*What is MT? continued*

- Music Therapy and dementia:

the importance of improvisation

the importance of song

### III. How can caregivers use music to connect with people with dementia?

Keep in mind:

- *Relationships* are at the heart of person-centred care.
- The most important moment is the *present*.

~ Carol Bowlby Sifton, 2004

## *Caregivers connecting, continued*

- Sing! (even if you think you can't...)
  - Use familiar music, known and loved
  - Remember: *slower* and *lower*
- Music activities
  - For increasing interest and motivation
  - Tailor for success, eg. finishing a line of “My Bonnie”
  - Try adding other sensory inputs during music (eg. smell, taste, touch)

*Caregivers connecting, continued*

- While performing activities of daily living (ADLs):
  - Try singing familiar songs during times of bathing, dressing, and toileting; this can have a significant calming influence, and can help someone “go through the motions.”

*Caregivers connecting, continued*

- During mealtimes
  - Use music recordings to establish a positive atmosphere, focus attention, or provide distraction; pay attention to what *type* of music you are using, as it should be neither too sedative nor too stimulative.

*Caregivers connecting, continued*

- Other times when music is useful:

Depression

Insomnia

Agitation

for Managing Pain and Anxiety

for Relaxation

To facilitate Movement and Exercise

- Be Creative!