



Music, Art and Alzheimer's

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Music and art can enrich the lives of people with Alzheimer's disease. Both allow for self-expression and engagement, even after dementia has progressed.

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Music

Music can be powerful. Studies have shown music may reduce agitation and improve behavioral issues that are common in the middle-stages of the disease. Even in the late-stages of Alzheimer's, a person may be able to tap a beat or sing lyrics to a song from childhood. Music provides a way to connect, even after verbal communication has become difficult.

Use these tips when selecting music for a person with dementia:

- > Identify music that's familiar and enjoyable to the person. If possible, let the person choose the music.
- > Choose a source of music that isn't interrupted by commercials, which can cause confusion.
- > Use music to create the mood you want. For example, a tranquil piece of music can help create a calm environment, while a faster paced song from someone's childhood may boost spirit and evoke happy memories.
- > Encourage movement (clapping, dancing) to add to the enjoyment.
- > Avoid sensory overload; eliminate competing noises by shutting windows and doors and by turning off the television. Make sure the volume of the music is not too loud.

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Although music has been with us since the dawn of time, in the last few decades studies have found that music as a therapeutic tool can increase cognitive function in Alzheimer's patients ... [read more.](#)

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Art

Art projects can create a sense of accomplishment and purpose. They can provide the person with dementia — as well as caregivers — an opportunity for self-expression.

When planning an art activity for someone with middle- to late-stage Alzheimer's, keep these tips in mind:

- > Keep the project on an adult level. Avoid anything that might be demeaning or seem child-like.
- > Build conversation into the project. Provide encouragement, discuss what the person is creating or reminiscence.
- > Help the person begin the activity. If the person is painting, you may need to start the brush movement. Most other projects should only require basic instruction and assistance.
- > Use safe materials. Avoid toxic substances and sharp tools.
- > Allow plenty of time, keeping in mind that the person doesn't have to finish the project in one sitting.

Map out a plan to approach Alzheimer's

Go to our free online tool, [Alzheimer's Navigator](#) and complete a series of short surveys to receive a customized action plan.

Learn more:
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