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Tips For Using Music Therapy

If you have seen the movie *The Notebook*, adapted from Nicholas Sparks's book with the same title, you know the power that music can have over those with memory loss. In this movie, Allie relives her life through a story being told by her husband, Noah. Allie has dementia and remembers little to nothing of her past, but through careful telling of these stories, she comes to remember her past, if only for a little while. While *The Notebook* shows the remarkable effects that reminiscence can have for those with memory loss, there is a scene often overlooked, one that has extreme significance. Even though Allie remembers very little of her past, she can recall from memory how to play the piano. The song she remembers to play, is a song she played during significant moments from her past. While this is a movie that is loosely based on a true story, events such as these happen all the time. Music is something that stays with those with memory loss, long after the disease takes over.

How Music Can Affect Those With Memory Loss

- **Music evokes emotions.** As memory loss progresses, it can become harder for those with Alzheimer's or dementia to share their emotions. They may either have a hard time finding the words or be unable to speak at all. Where those with memory loss may be unable to come up with the words to convey how they feel, the music can help them to show and express their feelings.
- **It allows those with memory loss to express themselves.** As time goes by, those with memory loss can begin to feel as though they are defined by their disease. Music therapy not only gives caregivers insight into their personalities and who they were, but it also helps them to get back in touch with who they are and who they used to be.
- **Music awakens movement.** When music they know begins playing, it is shown that those with memory loss can begin to tap their toes, dance or clap with the music. This can lift their spirits in a number of ways but most of all, it brings them joy and a feeling of being light-hearted.
- **Music evokes memories.** Listening to familiar songs that they used to know and love can allow those with memory loss to be able to remember events and feelings that were associated with the song or time in their past.

5 Ways to Take Advantage of the Effects of Music Therapy

1. **Listen to music.** Try scoping out music from your loved one's teenage or younger years. According to an article from [Psychology Today](#), using music from the time your loved one ranged from 8 to 18 years old could help them associate the music with memories. It states to try to play music from the Billboard Hot 100 charts from those specific years. Take note of what songs make your loved one come alive and compose a playlist off of that.

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2. **Take them to a show or concert.** Depending on your loved one's comfort level with outings, taking them to a show or concert is a possibility. Try focusing on the music from the times they remember or find a program that consists of music from their pasts.
3. **Watch musicals.** According to an article on [Alzheimers.net](https://www.alzheimers.net), listening to musicals can help your loved one enjoy the benefits of music therapy. Take into consideration what type of music they like most and what story they would be most interested in. The article suggests musicals and movies such as *The Sound of Music*, *Pinocchio* and *The Wizard of Oz*.
4. **Play music.** If your loved one with memory loss remember how to play an instrument, encourage them to do so. Like Allie in *The Notebook*, you may be pleasantly surprised by what music can make them remember.
5. **Try singing and dancing.** If your loved one is positively impacted by the music, encourage them to sing or dance if they are able. Because music therapy is shown to increase stimulation in the brain, it may become more possible for your loved one to sing and dance, giving them exercise and allowing for an emotional outlet.

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Our mission at Lions Gate is to enrich the lives of those we serve through quality and compassionate care consistent with our heritage and values. We strive to provide [programs and services](#) that inspire wellness as well as social, cultural and spiritual independence.

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