



Music & MemorySM is all about bringing joy into the lives of people living with Alzheimer’s disease, other forms of dementia, and a wide range of physical and cognitive impairments.

Brain-Music Connection

As we all know from hearing that song associated with a first love or hits that were popular in our teen years, music is profoundly linked to personal memories. In fact, our brains are hard-wired to connect music with long-term memory.

Even for persons with severe dementia, music can tap deep emotional recall. For individuals living with Alzheimer’s, memory for things—names, places, facts—is compromised, but memories from our teenage years can be well-preserved.

Favorite music or songs associated with important personal events can trigger memory of lyrics and the experience connected to the music. Beloved music often calms chaotic brain activity and enables the listener to focus on the present moment and regain a connection to others.

Persons with dementia, Parkinson’s and other diseases that damage brain chemistry also reconnect to the world and gain improved quality of life from listening to personal music favorites.

How to Set Up a Personalized Playlist

You’ll need three pieces of equipment:

- 1) A personal computer or laptop.
- 2) An iPod. While you can use any MP3 player, the organization has found iPod’s to be the easiest to use. The iPod Shuffle retails for \$46 at Target, Walmart, Best Buy and online such as Amazon.com.
- 3) Lightweight, over the ears headphones.

Find your Loved One’s Favorite Music

Sit down together to select the right music. The iPod shuffle can hold about 300 songs. Try to identify 80-100 songs between 10-12 artists. Here some good questions to start the conversation:

- What music did you listen to when you were young?
- Who was your favorite band or performer?
- What songs did you dance to at your wedding or high school dances?
- Do you have any records or tapes of your favorite bands?
- Did you sing at religious services? Which are your favorite hymns?
- Can you hum any favorites?



Set up iTunes

You've identified your loved one's favorite music, now it's time to create an iTunes account on your computer. Your iTunes account will serve as the master library for all of the music you will select to put on the iPod. You can add other content as well, such as audio books, old-time radio programs, and more.

Visit this website for tutorials on getting to know iTunes and how to install:

<http://www.apple.com/support/itunes/>

If you are not comfortable setting up an iTunes account or the iPod ask a relative – a great way for a grandchild to help and connect with a grandparent.

Now start by searching for your top favorite band and download to iTunes, then the iPod. Adding music from a CD that you've already purchased is a perfectly legal way to build up your library of music.

Helping your Loved One Learn to Use the iPod

If your loved one can use the television remote, then he or she may be able to use the iPod independently. Tailor your approach to fit their needs and abilities and be patient as you introduce the iPod and how to use it.

Plug in the headphones and adjust comfortably on your loved one's head. Set the volume and ask if it's loud enough. If they are not able to communicate this clearly, put it on your head and make sure it's not uncomfortably loud in order to prevent hearing damage.

Leave it set to "ON." This way your loved one will only need to learn how to use the PLAY/PAUSE button. If possible, show them how to skip forward to the next song.

It can be helpful to create a routine to remind the person to use the iPod regularly. Try to listen at 30 minutes a day, or even 30 minutes morning, afternoon, and night. Also, remember to plug in the iPod to charge for the next day.

Other thoughts

Timing is important. You can greatly reduce or prevent agitation by playing music to calm and distract. Listening to familiar music will help your loved one feel better, be more social and engaged, giving caregivers a needed respite. Sometimes music brings back positive memories, sometimes negative. If your loved one becomes emotional while listening, keep in mind it may be just fine for that to happen. You be the judge.

Music can be a wonderful way to relax, remember, and find enjoyment. For more information go to MusicandMemory.org