

Neurologic Music Therapy Services of Arizona

NMT and Alzheimer's/dementia

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are degenerative disorders of the brain and nervous system characterized by the deterioration of memory and other cognitive functions. These progressive losses affect the way an individual communicates, interacts, understands, and experiences daily life.

Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) is an evidence-based treatment model based on the neuroscience of music perception and performance. NMT treatment uses rhythm and music in order to drive changes in the structure and function of the brain and nervous system, thus optimizing how individuals are able to experience and interact with the world around them. Through prescribed music interventions, NMT creates opportunities for cognitive exercise and meaningful interaction for a person with memory loss.

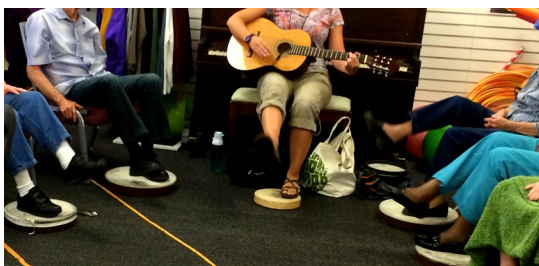
Music and Memories

As Alzheimer's and dementia progress, the neurologic damage impacts several areas of functioning, most notably, the ability to think, process, and recall information. Because music is processed in numerous areas of the brain, it can reach and recruit alternate pathways to enhance weak connections as well as bypass nonfunctional ones, resulting in better recall and recognition.

The areas of the brain that store long term memories are some of the final areas to be impacted by dementia. Because music is often linked directly to a memory, it can serve as a gateway to meaningful engagement and reminiscence. Music accesses a part of the person still intact in the midst of the disease process, and through that access, opens doors to other areas of functioning. Though music is a powerful link to memory, memories and emotions linked to music are not always positive. This is why it is best to consult a music therapist when utilizing music with someone with memory loss.



Active listening exercises promote active engagement, and elevate mood.



Playing drums with our feet to music designed to support the movement is a motivating way to exercise.

Moving to the Beat

Maintaining physical functioning is important for all older adults, especially those with memory loss. There is a direct connection between hearing rhythm and outputting movement. Because the brain automatically processes rhythm to inform movement, music is a highly effective treatment tool for maintaining movement skills for any individual with neurologic decline.

When working with individuals with memory loss, combining movement with familiar music results in full brain activation, promoting engagement, interaction with others, and attention maintenance.

By addressing Alzheimer's and dementia at the brain level, NMT can positively affect the skills and abilities a person needs to honor his/her identity, meaningfully relate to others, and engage in the highest possible quality of life

For more information about services available at NMTSA, contact us at info@nmtsa.org or on the web at www.nmtsa.org