

Notes on Christian Music Therapy for Persons Living with Dementia

These notes are derived from a presentation by Becky Watson, MBA, MT-BC, owner of Music for Wellness, LLC (music4wellness.net); and are focused on one on one outreach to persons with dementia

- In employing music therapy for persons living with dementia remember:
 - If you are not clergy or a Bible scholar, don't pretend to be.
 - Meet people where they are in the practice of their faith.
 - Share your personal Christian experience.
 - Share your love of music.
- Why use music with persons living with dementia
 - Although the brain is dying, rhythm is normally preserved
 - Valuable tool if you know how to use it
 - Promote a sense of value, meaning and purpose
 - Change mood (relax, calm, or energize)
 - Allows brain to organize and structure the predictable
 - Promoting arousal and movement for those who may have trouble getting started
 - Elicit emotional memories that are hard-wired in the brain rhythmically
 - Effective and often quick way to elicit a sense of peace, joy, remembrance, and positive feelings for everyone
 - Equal playing field... everyone can participate
- Suggested music CDs (* Available on Amazon and in the church library)(** Available on iTunes)
 - Floyd Cramer Gospel Classics Vol. 1*
 - Marilyn Sellars One Day at a Time
 - Alan Jackson Precious Memories* **
 - Elvis Presley He Touched Me*
- Music Engagement Kit
 - Bible (may be on your phone)
 - Cross
 - Song sheet (specifically made for individual) or lyric book
 - Music player or phone with preferred music
 - Speaker or over the ear headphones
- Learn the Individuals Preferences
 - What are the family relationships/names?
 - What denomination is the individual ?
 - What music do they like?
 - Are they conversational?
 - How is their hearing/eyesight?
- Always approach a person with dementia from the front and at their eye level.
- Listening together to music

- Refer to the book: Music, Memory, and Meaning by Meredith Hamons, Cathy Befi-Hensel, Tara Jenkins
- Pray before your music session that God's plan will be fulfilled
- Be humble
- Be patient
- Leave your needs behind during the session

- Deep Breathing with Music
 - Instrumental music; Floyd Cramer
 - Peace in the Valley
 - Shall We Gather at the River
 - His Eye on the Sparrow
 - What Else???

- Movement with Music
 - Songs with action words; Alan Jackson, Marilyn Sellers
 - Just a Closer Walk with Thee
 - We are Marching to Zion
 - Love Lifted Me
 - When the Saints go Marching In
 - Leaning on the Everlasting Lord
 - So High (Elvis)
 - On the Wings of a Dove

- Singing with Body Gestures
 - Hand/Arms:
 - He's Got the Whole World
 - Oh Suzannah
 - She'll be Comin Round the Mountain
 - Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
 - Take My Hand Precious Lord
 - You Raised Me Up
 - Will the Circle be Unbroken
 - Legs/Toes:
 - Precious Memories
 - Sweet Bye and Bye
 - Elvira

- Singing
 - Use a sing along CD or DVD or sing without recorded music
 - Pick favorite songs to sing together
 - Make a song sheet with a few choices
 - Sing while assisting in the shower and during everyday tasks
 - Refer to the book: Connecting through Music with People with Dementia by Robin Rio