

Music therapy is a valuable clinical intervention for people of all ages and abilities. It can work where other treatments cannot, making connections and providing vital support.

We all relate to music because it connects with what it means to be human. Our bodies work to rhythms - from our heartbeats to our sleep patterns. Songs can evoke powerful memories. Even the way we speak has the tones, rhythm and structure of music.

This unique, client-led clinical intervention is accessible to everyone as no pre-existing musical skills are required. It's not about being able to play an instrument or learning musical skills. It's about using the innate musicality that we all have, making a connection and enabling people to communicate.

Your music therapist is a trained professional who can guide you by tailoring sessions to your needs thus helping you to get the greatest benefit. The music therapist will create a safe, therapeutic space and facilitate you in using music as a means of self-expression, interaction and communication, providing the opportunity to be listened to, heard and supported.



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Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust is the leading music therapy charity in Northern Ireland and has wide experience of providing music therapy for clients with dementia. Music therapists are Allied Health Professionals and must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Contact us to find out more.



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Music Therapy & Dementia

In dementia care, music therapy can bring benefits in the following areas:

- Psychological and physical support: alleviating pain, anxiety, discomfort, agitation, depression, apathy, and loss of self-confidence.
- Facilitating self-expression, improving self-esteem and identity, providing emotional support, enhancing mood and quality of life.
- Increasing responsiveness, interest, focus and concentration.
- Reducing isolation, promoting social inclusion and interactions, strengthening bonds, facilitating communication with others.
- Accessing memories, even in people with advanced dementia, enabling them to share these with others in reminiscence, life review and legacy work, including creating recordings.

Every music therapy session is tailored precisely to the needs of the person taking part, but for example a session may include:

- Shared improvisation or playing pre-composed music using accessible musical instruments.
- Listening to, playing, singing or discussing familiar music which has particular meaning for you, thus stimulating memories.
- Song-writing - setting poems to music or creating your own music or lyrics - facilitated by the therapist.

The music therapist attends a ward for dementia patients with complex behavioural problems requiring a high level of care for one hour a week holding group and / or individual sessions based on the needs of the patients that week.

The group sessions have been beneficial for social interaction, physical skills, and memory recall-sometimes singing a song from their era will stimulate memories of another song or another artist and patients will request songs that way. Patients are also given the opportunity to play instruments along with the music and sometimes it turns into improvised music which provides a creative experience helping exercise new neural networks.

Individual sessions work in a similar way and the patient will also interact more closely with the therapist developing a relationship with a person centred approach.

Quote from staff member observing the session - "Christine gets great enjoyment from music therapy, after every session she is less agitated more sociable and relaxed. The staff find that when she is actively engaged in singing songs from her era it stimulates memories and conversation. Her mood is also lifted especially in a group situation when she is engaging with others socially."

"...creative experience helping exercise new neural networks"



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