

# ARTS & THE MIND

WITH LISA KUDROW

## Music Activity for people with Alzheimer's and Dementia

By Nicola Demonte

Listening to music can facilitate wellness and relaxation by lowering one's heart rate, and blood pressure. Singing and playing an instrument can also affect skin conductance, cardiac output, muscle tone, pupillary responses, the immune system, endorphin production and breathing rate. Recent studies have shown that music listening and performance resulted in increased secretion of melatonin, a hormone linked with enhanced sleep, mood regulation, lower anger, and reduced depression.

### Music activity:

Music is a balance of rhythm, harmony, and melody.

1. Start compiling a music library, especially music that the person was/is familiar with.
2. Using mobile technology to keep time: For clapping and accurate time-keeping, download a free Metronome program on your iphone/ipad or personal computer:

Steinway Metronome:

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/steinway-metronome/id393021343?mt=8>

3. Start with a simple rhythm... clap your hands using a 1-4 count: clap 1, 2, 3, 4
4. Use sheet music or a karaoke player to sing along with the person.
5. Encourage the person to participate by singing, clapping, toe tapping, or drumming.
6. Know the two types of music and the effect it has on our mood and well-being:
  - o "*Stimulative*" music uses percussive sounds that can help people who fall asleep during meals or bathing.
  - o "*Sedative*" music can deeply relax or sedate the listener, has little or no percussive sound, slower tempos and is ideal for bedtime or when someone is agitated, angry, confused or fearful.
7. Sedative music can also assist in contemplation, meditation, and prayer.

### References:

Brotans M, Koger SM. The impact of music therapy on language functioning in dementia. J Music Ther. 2000 Fall; 37(3): 183-95.

Voss JA, Good M, Yates B, Baun MM, Thompson A, Hertzog M. Sedative music reduces anxiety and pain during chair rest after open-heart surgery. Pain. 2004 Nov; 112(1-2): 197-203.

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