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How Music Helps Both Caregivers and Their Care Partners

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Did you know that at this very moment, there are 16 million unpaid caregivers tending to the needs of a PLwD (Person Living with Dementia) around the clock and the value of the services that caregivers provide for “free” is estimated to be \$375 billion annually?

It is no wonder so many caregivers experience fatigue and burnout.

Caregivers often are so busy caring for others that they tend to neglect their own physical, mental, and spiritual needs. The best way for a caregiver to remain effective is by taking care of him or herself.

So what’s an easy, inexpensive and lasting way to alleviate the stressful effects of caregiving?

It’s music.

That music creates positive mood and behavior changes is well known. Music is truly a universal medium, so it should come as no surprise that caregivers report the positive effect music has on their care partners and loved ones as they struggle through the difficulties of this disease.

What does exposure to music on a daily basis do for a PLwD?

- Music can bring back remote memories and may open a pathway to reconnection (play favorite tunes from the past).
- Music can lead to increased engagement.
- Listening to music encourages concentration.
- Music creates a soothing sensation (usually within 30 minutes or less).
- Just as music can help promote calmness, it can also energize (and these effects can last up to three hours after the music stops).
- Music challenges people intellectually.
- People listening to music tend to feel stimulated creatively.
- Music can help change a person’s mood, whether we are feeling up or down.

During regularly scheduled daily music interludes, the PLwD can experience one or more of these positive effects, which in turn will lessen the stress of the caregiver. In fact, in many cases, the music is so engrossing for the PLwD that it enables the caregiver to take a well-deserved break. So the music is not only for the PLwD, but benefits the overworked and stressed caregiver as well.

Do not underestimate the power of something as simple as music.

Give it a try today!

Cheryl comes to PAC from Alzheimer's Music Connect, a company that specializes in music which is designed to help calm, soothe, and engage both PLwD (person living with dementia) and their Caregivers at the same time. Before beginning that company, Cheryl was an executive in the music business and a lawyer. Her career change came when her father was diagnosed with Alzheimers.