



# Musicking for *Now*

Musicking  
With Alzheimer's Disease and  
Related Dementias

Creating Meaningful Moments  
with Music in 5 Easy Steps

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# Musicking for *Now*

*Welcome!*

You know how the agencies and organizations for Alzheimer's Disease and dementia encourage those living with dementia and their caregivers to "play music, listen to music, and move to music"? Even though you know having music with your person with dementia is a good idea, do you feel uncomfortable trying it? Do you wonder how to get started using music? Are you using music but curious about what more you can do?

I wrote this eBook as a part of the Musicking for Now service to guide family caregivers of persons living with dementia to start using music and to do more with music. Ultimately, I want to **help caregivers feel more comfortable, confident, and creative in using music** to make living with dementia better for all.

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Who am I?

I am Julie Martin, a Board Certified Music Therapist since 1997, with experience in healthcare settings, including children's hospitals and hospice. I have trained volunteers and staff members how to use music in their interactions with patients, and I want to bring that experience to the family caregiver. Thank you for allowing me to guide you in ways to incorporate music into daily life with your family member with dementia in this eBook.

*Disclaimer: The information in this publication is not intended to replace professional Music Therapy services or other medical advice or care. For more information on Music Therapy services, visit [www.pensacolamusictherapy.com](http://www.pensacolamusictherapy.com).*



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# Musicking with *ADRD*

## Introduction

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The goal of this eBook is to guide you to play recorded music during interactions with your loved one with dementia. Notice that I use the words "during interactions with." This means that you or someone is spending time with your loved one as music is played.

For ease and inspiration, I have developed conversation starters/activities with sample songs that focus on 3 areas of human function and experience: Relational-Social, Emotional-Spiritual, and Physical. You will also find guidance on how and when to incorporate musicking sessions to help ease agitation and sun-downing, uplift the mood, improve attention, and most important, maintain connections to the self and others for as long as possible.

The music that you will use with your person needs to be what they know and like. However, knowing that it can take time to put a playlist together or to find music, I have curated a Spotify playlist called, "Musicking ADRD" under the username "Musicking for Now" to accompany this eBook. The songs are from the 40's, 50's, and 60's popular genre. I have included the song titles with the conversations/activities and listed them at the end of the this book. Feel free to use these songs if they are in the style your person likes.

## What is Musicking?

Music is an action, and without performance, there would be no music. The term "musicking" is a form of the verb "to music." Musicking is any participation in music that is performed live or on a recording. Musicking includes listening to music, playing an instrument, singing, or dancing. In a musical performance, there is representation of ideal relationships with the self, others, the world, and the spiritual universe. The musicking sessions described in this guide are intended to help caregivers tap into those relationships to activate social interactions, emotional expression, and physical movement for the purpose of easing the experience of Alzheimer's Disease and dementia and reinforcing connections to others.



# Musicking with *ADRD*

## When to Have a Musicking Session

Musicking sessions can happen anytime during the day depending on how they will help your person with dementia:

- In the morning, a session for physical activity can uplift the mood and prepare the body for various activities of the day.
- Before lunch, a session of singing songs and talking about favorite things, including favorite foods, can stimulate your person's appetite and attention to food.
- In the afternoon, a session of listening to songs and reminiscing that takes place 30 minutes to an hour before sun-downing usually begins may help prevent or ease agitation and confusion.
- Before leaving the home, a few minutes of musicking with a song like, "Come On, Let's Go" by Richie Valens can prepare your person to go somewhere.
- In the evening, a session of quiet songs and putting lotion on your person's hands or feet can prepare the body and mind for sleep.

**"How often should I have musicking sessions?" Once a week is good, 3 times a week is better, for 10 to 30 minutes each session.**



*What times of the day do you think music can help your person?*



*Connect it: If you are doing a musicking session in the morning or in the afternoon after your person naps, start your session with your Connection Song. (See the video called, "Let's Get Connected")*



# Musicking with *ADRD*

## How to Have a Musicking Session

Here are tips to have an enjoyable and effective musicking session. Begin by giving yourself permission to be present and take a few deep breaths.

- Find a place that is free from distracting noises or activity.
- Have your music player turned to a low volume.
- Invite your person to listen to music with you.
- Start the music, then turn up the volume to a level that can be easily heard by your person without overwhelming them.
- Play through the first song to help your person's physical, memory, language, and awareness areas in the brain become activated. Hum, sing, or hold their hands.
- Begin your conversation or exercise after the first song.

**"I have children. Can they participate?" Yes! The movement and reminiscing activities are good opportunities for them to participate.**



Where is a quiet place with few distractions?



Connect it: A way to adapt a connection song is to have a "warm up" song to start every session. This is a song that can be playing as you bring your person into the place for the musicking session. Pick a song that is of medium tempo and speed, such as, "Beyond the Sea" by Bobby Darin.



# Three Areas of *Function*

With dementia, there is a loss of function. Social functioning declines either through loss of memory of self and others or through isolation. Anger, agitation, sadness, and depression may occur as cognitive function decreases. Loss of strength, balance, and mobility and change in routines can decrease the opportunities for physical activity. As areas of function are inter-related, decline or support in one area can affect other areas.

For the purpose of this book, I have organized human function into 3 areas: Relational-Social, Emotional-Spiritual, and Physical. The purpose of organizing the areas this way is to keep it simple; "it" being adding music to living with dementia as a family caregiver. To further assist you in adding music to your person's life, I have listed 7 conversation starters/activities (1 per day of the week if that will be your routine) for each area. These are suggestions to get you started, but are not the only topics or activities you can incorporate with music listening.

**"What if I don't have time to do that much?" The elegance of musicking is that you can focus on one area, but at the same time, you are helping the other areas. So, even if your time for musicking is limited to 1 to 3 times a week or if you want to focus on 1 area, a holistic benefit can occur.**

List the areas of functioning for your person by importance:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Connect it: A single song can affect memory, movement, language, awareness, cognitive processing, emotions, motivation, and sense of connection to a higher power.



# Relational-Social

In the brain, music that we know and like stimulates autobiographical memories. What comes with those autobiographical memories are the memories of relationships:

- to the self
- to others such as family, friends, co-workers
- to places
- to time
- to spiritual beliefs and connections

Here are conversation starters and sample songs to engage your person in connecting with their lives. The order of topics moves from self outward to the world, making a nice flow for daily sessions. Otherwise, use the topic(s) your person will most likely enjoy.

- |   |              |   |
|---|--------------|---|
|  | <b>Day 1</b> | Connect to Self: "What would you like me to know about you?"<br>Song: "In My Room" The Beach Boys                                       |
|  | <b>Day 2</b> | Connect to You (Caregiver): "This song makes me think of you." Song:<br>"Dedicated to the One I Love" The Mamas and the Papas/Shirelles |
|  | <b>Day 3</b> | Connect to Others: "Who would you like to say, 'Hello' to?"<br>Song: "Hello Darlin'" Conway Twitty/Loretta Lynn                         |
|  | <b>Day 4</b> | Connect to Family: "Who is in your family?" "Tell me more about<br>him/her." Song: "Que Sera, Sera" Doris Day                           |
|  | <b>Day 5</b> | Connect to Places: "If you could go anywhere, where would you go?"<br>Song: "Route 66" Nat King Cole; "King of the Road" Roger Miller   |
|  | <b>Day 6</b> | Connect to the Moment: "What is special about right now?"<br>Song: "This Magic Moment" The Drifters/Jay & the Americans                 |
|  | <b>Day 7</b> | Connect to the World: "What is special in this world?"<br>Song: "What a Wonderful World" Louis Armstrong                                |



# Emotional-Spiritual

Emotions enhance the formation of memories, and music stimulates emotions, either for the music itself, or for the experience during which the music was heard. Our experiences are a part of our autobiographical memory that is stimulated when the related music is heard. Likewise, music can evoke a deep sense of connection to something greater than us and to the collective of all living things. Music can re-create the sense of these relationships with their accompanying emotions.

As the music guides your loved one into emotional and spiritual reminiscence, be present and supportive. Exquisite moments happen here. \*With photographs, strong emotions about people who are no longer living may happen. Use your judgement in choosing this activity.

-  **Day 1** *Reminisce about Movies: Listen to songs from movies and talk about what was special about this movie. Song: "Moon River" Andy Williams*
-  **Day 2** *Reminisce with Pictures: Pull out photos and talk about how they make you feel. Song: "An Old Faded Photograph" Hank Thompson*
-  **Day 3** *Reminisce about Favorite Things: "What is your favorite...?"  
Song: "Favorite Things" Julie Andrews*
-  **Day 4** *Reminisce about Age: "What was your favorite age to be and why?"  
Song: "When I'm Sixty-four" Paul McCartney*
-  **Day 5** *"What's the most important thing to you today?"  
Song: "Wouldn't It Be Nice" The Beach Boys*
-  **Day 6** *"How does music make you feel? What else makes you feel like that?" Song: "Unchained Melody" The Righteous Brothers*
-  **Day 7** *"What are you grateful for?"  
Song: "I Believe in You" Don Williams*



# Physical

In the brain, the connection between the auditory and motor systems is very sensitive. This is why when we hear a song with a "beat you can dance to" we feel that need to dance. Rhythm not only elicits movement, it organizes movement by providing the movement with a structure. This is why it seems easier to do that cardio workout with music than without, if the tempo or speed is right for the movement.

Movement also has the effect of uplifting the mood and promoting well-being.

-  **Day 1** Go for a walk. Songs: "Twilight Time" The Platters; "Walkin' After Midnight" Patsy Cline
-  **Day 2** Dance. "Tennessee Waltz" Patti Page; "Papa Loves Mambo" Perry Como
-  **Day 3** Breathe slow and deep. Songs: "Come Softly Darling" The Fleetwoods; "Sleep Walk" Santo & Johnny
-  **Day 4** Upper body movement (See Exercises). Songs: "Mashed Potato Time" Dee Dee Sharp; "Stop in the Name of Love" The Supremes
-  **Day 5** Lower body movement (See Exercises). Songs: "The Loco-Motion" Little Eva; "Duke of Earl" Gene Chandler
-  **Day 6** Relax. Songs: "All I Have to Do is Dream" Everly Brothers; "Can't Help Falling in Love" Elvis Presley
-  **Day 7** Apply lotion to hands and/or feet (See Comforting Touch). Songs "Catch a Falling Star" Perry Como; "Dream" Rosemary Clooney



# Considerations About

# *Music*

## Considerations About Music

Whether you use headphones or a speaker depends on the comfort of your person. With either, it is important that you can also hear the music to better interact with your person. Always start the music at a low volume then increase the volume to a comfortable level. This avoids startling your person and instead, triggers an orientation response.

Negative responses to music can happen. For example, a song might cause or increase agitation. A person may become overly stimulated and unable to focus on the conversation or activity. Music can also cause someone to feel intense, especially if a song is tied to a person who has died or is estranged or to a traumatic event. If a reaction happens that is distressing to you or to your loved one, **stop the music** and use a calm voice to redirect your person. If your person normally responds well to music and is suddenly becoming stressed, this could be an indication that something else is happening, such as pain or discomfort. These situations are worth discussing with your person's doctor, counselor, or clergy.

Because a single song can stimulate several areas of the brain, a song that is good for stimulating a physical response one day may be good for reinforcing a relationship another day or for starting a conversation on another day. It's okay to use the same song in different situations, especially if you have limited time to build a playlist.

While people with dementia respond best to music they know and like, in the earlier stages of dementia, music that is new to them can also be used to stimulate processing areas of the brain. As dementia progresses, however, the brain is unable to process and encode new information. Unfamiliar songs fall under the characterization of "new information." This can even apply to a familiar song covered by a singer/band different from the one your person came to know.



# Creating a Musicking *Session*

## Creating a Musicking Session in 5 Easy Steps

Here we are! I trust that after reading the when, how, and function sections of this book, you are getting some ideas about the actual musicking session. Knowing when musicking will happen and how it will happen and why it will happen leads to getting a better benefit from the session. So, let's create a session. Refer to your notes in the previous pages.

The 5 Steps:

- Determine what days and time(s) of day to have a session (Page 5)
- Determine where to have a session (Page 6)
- Determine what area your person would most likely enjoy and participate in (Page 7)
- Determine the experience for the session (experiences can be repeated) (Pages 8-10)
- Choose 2-4 songs for the session (songs can be used more than once)

Here is a sample plan:

- Day/Time: Tuesday, Thursday at 10:00am; Sunday at 3:00pm
- Dining room (to help transition to mealtimes - notice the behavioral benefit)
- Area: Physical
- Experiences: Upper body movement, Lower body movement, Dance
- Songs: Mashed Potato Time/Stop in the Name of Love; The Locomotion/The Duke of Earl; The Twist

You can find worksheets to plan musicking sessions starting on page 15.

Please feel free to use the sample songs in your musicking sessions if they are in the style of music your person likes. They are collected in a Spotify playlist called, "Musicking ADRD" under the username, "Musicking for Now."



# Exercises and Comforting *Touch*

## Exercises

**Prior to beginning any exercise routine talk to your person's doctor about what exercises are safe and effective to use with your person, including repetitions, duration of exercise, and frequency each week. You can take those movements and do them to your person's preferred music.**

Here is an opportunity to let the music guide your creativity and stimulate your person's creativity, too.

For example, if the focus is on upper body movement, invite your person to help you make up "dance movements" for the song using the hands, arms, and shoulders. (How many ways could you show, "Bye" in "Bye Bye, Love" by the Everly Brothers?) You can even watch videos of Motown artists for inspiration. You can also take turns being the leader. Introduce this by saying, "Let's do some moving. I'll take the first lead." On the chorus of the song, tell your person, "You can lead now. Show me what to do." This activity is a good one to involve children. Giving them the opportunity to be a leader lets them make choices, which is good for their well-being, development, and socialization with your person with dementia.

For safety, do lower body exercises while seated fully back in a chair that has arm rests. Use the same process as above for creating lower body movements.

As dementia progresses, your person may not be able to take the lead or help you create movements. This opens an opportunity to hold your person's hands and gently move to the music. Make eye contact, smile, and enjoy the moment yourself.



# Exercises and Comforting *Touch*

## Comforting Touch

**I recommend seeking out and talking with a Licensed Massage Therapist or an Occupational Therapist in your area about gentle hand and foot massage for your person with dementia. There is growing research and conversation about the benefits of massage to those living with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. These professionals can guide you in gentle techniques that both comfort your person, help them interact with you, and potentially ease agitation. Additionally, when you bring yourself into the moment by taking slower and deeper breaths, you, too, will become more relaxed and less stressed.**

The following general tips come from my experience working with a Licensed Massage Therapist in a large hospice in Florida. I helped her create a training for the Home Health Aide staff and volunteers teaching them a technique we called "Comfort Touch." I was always happy to help in the trainings since the staff and volunteers needed someone on whom to practice the technique.

1. Ask your person for permission to put lotion on their hands.
2. Prepare yourself for being present in the moment by taking a few deep breaths.
3. Start your music. \*Music can be relaxing instrumental music in this situation.
4. Support your persons hands and arms or feet with pillows or rolled towels.
5. Warm the lotion in your hands before applying it.
6. Starting with one hand, apply the lotion from mid-arm down to the finger tips.
7. Gently work the lotion into the top of the hand.
8. Turn the hand over and gently work the lotion in to the palm then each finger.
9. Return your person's hand to a supported position.
10. Follow the steps for the other hand.



# Musicking Session *Worksheet*

**Session #**\_\_

Day/Time

Location

Area of Function

Conversation/Activity

Songs and Source (i.e. Spotify, CD, iPod)

**Session #**\_\_

Day/Time

Location

Area of Function

Conversation/Activity

Songs and Source (i.e. Spotify, CD, iPod)



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Songs and Source (i.e. Spotify, CD, iPod)

**Session #**\_\_

Day/Time

Location

Area of Function

Conversation/Activity

Songs and Source (i.e. Spotify, CD, iPod)



# Spotify Playlist

All I Have to Do is Dream  
An Old Faded Photograph  
As Time Goes By  
Beyond the Sea  
Bye Bye Love  
Can't Help Falling in Love  
Catch a Falling Star  
Cheek to Cheek  
Come Go With Me  
Come On, Let's Go  
Come Softly to Me  
This is Dedicated to the One I Love  
This is Dedicated to the One I Love  
Dream  
Downtown  
Duke of Earl  
Earth Angel  
Goldfinger  
Grandpa (Tell Me 'bout the Good Ole Days)  
Hello Darlin'  
Hello Darlin'  
I Believe in You  
In my Room  
King of the Road  
Loco-Motion  
Love is Here to Stay  
Mashed Potato Time  
Memories are Made of This  
Moon River  
My Favorite Things  
Never Be Anyone Else But You  
Papa Loves Mambo

The Everly Brothers  
Hank Thompson and His Brazos Valley Boys  
Vera Lynn  
Bobby Darin  
The Everly Brothers  
Elvis Presley  
Perry Como  
Fred Astaire  
The Del-Vikings  
Richie Valens  
The Fleetwoods  
The Mamas and the Papas  
The Shirelles  
Rosemary Clooney  
Petula Clark  
Gene Chandler  
The Penguins  
Shirley Bassey  
The Judds  
Conway Twitty  
Loretta Lynn  
Don Williams  
The Beach Boys  
Roger Miller  
Little Eva  
Frank Sinatra  
Dee Dee Sharp  
Dean Martin  
Andy Williams  
Julie Andrews  
Ricky Nelson  
Perry Como



# Spotify Playlist

Que Sera, Sera  
Rock Around the Clock  
Route 66  
Sleep Walk  
Stop! In the Name of Love  
Tennessee Waltz  
This Magic Moment  
This Magic Moment  
Twilight Time  
Unchained Melody  
Under the Boardwalk  
Walkin' After Midnight  
What a Wonderful World  
When I'm Sixty-Four  
Wouldn't I Be Nice

Doris Day  
Bill Haley & His Comets  
Nat King Cole  
Santo & Johnny  
The Supremes  
Patti Page  
The Drifters  
Jay & The Americans  
The Platters  
The Righteous Brothers  
The Drifters  
Patsy Cline  
Louis Armstrong  
The Beatles  
The Beach Boys

# Final Thoughts

Bringing music with your presence to your family member with dementia creates a moment in time when each of you can say, "Here I am. This is who I am." This is the reason I want to support you in creating those musicking moments. Many times I have seen the light of love and connection shine between a person with dementia and the ones who love and care for them because of music. It is an exquisite moment that anyone living with Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia is worthy of experiencing. I am grateful you have allowed me to accompany you in your journey.

If you have questions or need more support, please send me an email. I am happy to help through emails or coaching. [attunedmusictherapyllc@gmail.com](mailto:attunedmusictherapyllc@gmail.com)

With deepest regard and gratitude,

*Julie*

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Musicking for *Now* is a service of  *Attuned*  
Music Therapy and Services

For more information on Music Therapy, please visit [www.pensacolamusictherapy.com](http://www.pensacolamusictherapy.com) or send an email to [attunedmusictherapyllc@gmail.com](mailto:attunedmusictherapyllc@gmail.com). As one of over 7,000 Music Therapists in the United States, I am happy to serve you in Northwest Florida or refer you to a Music Therapist in your area.