

We are proud to announce that we are newly certified from the

Music & Memory Certification Program

We can all relate to the concept that music can trigger memories. Hearing a song can trigger personal memories associated with a first love or a wedding. This is because our brains are hard-wired to connect music with long-term memory. Even new songs can trigger memories, based on the lyrics of the singer and emotions heard through the instruments. A sad song about the loss of a beloved dog can trigger memories of a childhood pet just as much as a romantic song about getting engaged can trigger memories of those dating, engagement and marriage memories. Even for a person with severe dementia, music can tap deep emotional recall. Favorite music or songs associated with important personal events can trigger memory of lyrics and the experience connected to the music. Beloved music often calms chaotic brain activity and enables the listener to focus on the present moment and regain a connection to others.

Music is, of course, a popular recreational activity here. We are never lacking participants during our Open Mic Night or at our live performances; the room is always filled. Our residents love performances and sing-alongs, and with good reason; music uplifts the spirits. But group-based music programs, while meaningful, are designed for broad appeal. Selections are age-appropriate, but can never be completely personal. More so, while these performances are meaningful, they are time-bound. While enjoyable, perhaps the resident would enjoy listening to music during their own time, and this is where having an iPod with a personalized playlist comes to be an especially significant tool. Personalized music playlists, delivered using iPods, have the capacity to transform quality of life for individuals struggling with a wide range of physical and cognitive impairments.

By using music we are able to help those struggling with Alzheimer's, dementia and other cognitive and physical challenges to reconnect with the world through music-triggered memories. While Alzheimer's damages the ability to recall facts and details, it does not destroy these lasting connections between a favorite song and memory of an important life event, no matter how long ago. When individuals suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia hear a melody connected with a meaningful memory, they can re-awaken. Many people who have not spoken in years find words and sing lyrics. They often regain the ability to converse and connect to those around them. The key is a personalized playlist. We learned how to customize a playlist for each individual, even if he or she has no voice. Already we can claim that residents using the iPods are calmer and engage in more appropriate social behavior. Residents enjoy a continuous flow of unexpected, positive outcomes. As residents listen to their playlists, agitation fades. Once-remote individuals come alive and reconnect. Individuals look forward to listening to their iPods as a valued activity. Family and staff are able to connect in a more meaningful way with their loved ones around music and memories. Our staff is properly trained and experienced how to bring personalized music into the lives of the elderly through digital music technology, vastly improving quality of life. Thanks to the training of Dan Cohen and the extensive neuroscience research about how our brains respond to music, we are able to benefit from the Music and Memory training program.