



Music Therapy for Seniors



Hey Grandma, what is your jam!? Jazz, classical, gospel, praise/faith, dance, pop, rap, rock; the list goes on. Different strokes for different folks. When music enters our brains, it triggers pleasure centers that release dopamine, a neurotransmitter that makes one feel happy and rewarded. Music has also been shown to boost immunity, stimulate endorphins, oxytocin (hormone), help energize mood; as well as assist in the treatment of depression and diseases such as Parkinson's.

Different genres have different impacts on the body and mind:

- **Classical** – Enhances dopamine secretion & synaptic function, learning & memory
- **Heavy Metal** – Elicits a sense of identity & a knack for community development
- **Rap** – Stimulates emotion, language, motivation, motor function & processing via 'flow state'
- **Pop/Rock** – Improves endurance & enhances physical performance. It can also distract you while you are working.
- **Jazz** – Soothes the body

In many retirement communities, music therapy programs are offered to help older adults deal with age-related problems such as general stress, depression, chronic pain and memory impairment. Music therapy is intended to maintain or increase their levels of physical, mental, social, and emotional functioning; and is used as a sensory, as well as intellectual stimulation, which can help maintain a person's quality of life or improve it. Music is particularly beneficial for people struggling with memory loss because it is easier for them to access the memory of a melody than to recall a person's name or past event. Music and memory are intimately intertwined, so playing music from one's past can bring back many memories or younger years. Studies have shown that stroke survivors listening to their favorite tunes while recovering helped them regain their ability to recognize words and communicate. They were also less likely to be depressed and confused, which are two common post-stroke side effects.

To summarize, the health benefits that music offers older adults are:

- **Stress reduction** (Dopamine is the “feel good” neuron, and is released when music enters the brain making one happier/feel rewarded, reducing stress)
- **Inspires movement** (Help build muscle tone and improve strength & balance.)
- **Improves speech and cognitive skills** (Easier to remember words to rhythm; helps emotional and sensory parts of the brain, as well)
- **Increases social activity** (Enjoying music with others, talking about past memories associated with the music, dancing, etc.)

It doesn't matter what type of music one listens to, as long as it makes them happy and puts them in the mental and/or physical place they want to be. Many people like a wide range of genres and tailor their music choice to the mood they are in that day, or the mood they want to get to. As we age, our musical tastes may change, as well. Turn it up, and play those feel good tunes for health and mental well-being.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:

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<https://bethanylutheranvillage.org/4-benefits-music-therapy-seniors/>

<http://www.todaygeriatricmedicine.com/news/story1.shtml>

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