

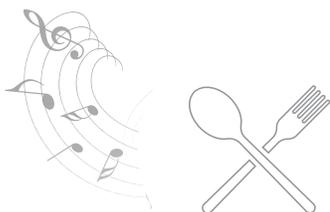


Background Music

TO CREATE A CALM ENVIRONMENT

Everyone needs a healthy diet to feel their best each day. This is especially true for loved ones with dementia who may struggle to eat enough food for proper nutrition. Even if healthy meals are available to your loved one, you may find that they are not engaged with eating, or they simply do not eat enough to keep their body nourished.

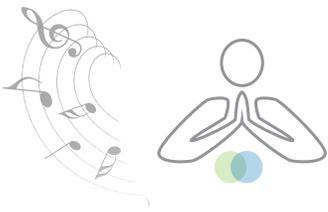
What can you do to help your loved one stay at the table longer and potentially increase the amount of food eaten at breakfast, lunch and dinner? Research suggests that calm background music during mealtime can increase time spent at the table and impact nutritional intake.



CONSIDER HOW YOUR LOVED ONE MIGHT RESPOND TO MUSIC DURING MEALS

Every individual is unique in their response to music. Your loved one may find music during mealtimes pleasurable and peaceful, or they may find music distracting and confusing. Ask your loved one if they would like to “turn on the radio” while eating. If they say no, respect their wishes and reintroduce the idea another day or at a different mealtime. If they say yes, turn on the music and check in with your loved one about how they are enjoying the music. Watching their response is a good way to monitor their enjoyment level.

References: Thomas, D. W. & Smith, M. (2009). The effect of music on caloric consumption among nursing home residents with dementia of the Alzheimer's type. *Activities, Adaption & Aging*, 33(1), 1-16. Mead, R. (2020, February 3). Does music help dementia: Mealtimes. *Musica music & wellbeing*. <https://musica-music.co.uk/2020/02/03/does-music-help-dementia-mealtimes>. Whear, R. et al. (2014). Effectiveness of mealtime interventions on behavior symptoms of people with dementia living in care homes: A systematic review. *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*, 15(3), 185-193.



TIPS FOR CHOOSING MUSIC FOR A CALM ENVIRONMENT

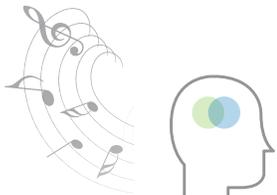
Choosing the right music is essential to creating an environment that promotes calmness for a person living with dementia. Here are four tips:

Ask your loved one what music they enjoy. Preferred and familiar music is typically most enjoyable.

Consider using relaxing, instrumental music without abrupt changes in volume or tempo. Fast, upbeat music or music with abrupt changes can be overstimulating for your loved one. Likewise, using music without words can keep the music in the background. Some recommended types of music are soft classical music or music featuring piano, acoustic guitar or other stringed instruments.

Use different music each meal. Avoid playing the same playlist repeatedly. Collect many different songs for mealtimes and vary the song selections. If you are using a streaming service like Spotify, you can “shuffle play,” which chooses songs on the playlist at random. This slight variation will help keep the music fresh, even if some songs are repeated. If you are using CDs, have several to use during mealtimes.

If your loved one’s favorite songs are fast and upbeat, consider using instrumental covers of the music. Streaming services often have instrumental versions of popular songs that often can be calmer than the original version. Find a song like this by searching “‘song title’ instrumental”. This may be a good way to keep music soft while still honoring your loved one’s favorite song choices.



TIPS FOR PLAYING MUSIC FOR A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

Just as choosing appropriate music is important, the way that it is played also is important. Consider these three tips:

Use a medium that does not have ads or commercials. These interruptions often are abrupt and can startle your loved one. CDs and mp3 players are a good way to ensure that there will be no commercials while music is playing. Streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music and Pandora Radio also have ad-free options, although these require a paid subscription to remove ads. Be careful with cell phones. If you receive a call or notification while music is playing, it could disrupt the environment.

Find the right volume. The volume should be loud enough for your loved one to hear, but soft enough to talk over. This can be tricky and may take some time to figure out. Try adjusting the volume in very small increments to not startle your loved one while searching for a good listening volume.

Use a quality speaker or CD player to enrich the sound. Clear sound can add to the calming effect of music.

Using these tips to introduce music during breakfast, lunch or dinner can enhance your loved one’s desire to engage longer with their meal. Introduce the idea to your loved one and let them determine if music during a meal is something they would enjoy.