

Family Activity Guide

Music-Based Activities to Enjoy Together

Why Music-Based Activities?

Music has a unique ability to engage memory, emotions, and movement. While dementia can affect communication and memory, familiar songs often remain meaningful and can help create moments of comfort, recognition, and connection.

These simple activities are designed to encourage interaction at home, during visits, or while attending a live performance.

Tip: Focus on enjoying the moment together rather than doing the activity "correctly."

Activity 1 — Sing Along

What You'll Need

🎵 A playlist of favourite songs or live music

How to Do It

- Choose songs your loved one enjoyed in their younger years.
- Sing together, even if only a few words are remembered.
- Encourage humming, clapping, or tapping along.

Why It Helps

Singing familiar songs can encourage participation, improve mood, and strengthen emotional connections.

Activity 2 — Memory Through Music

What You'll Need

🎵 Favourite songs

📷 Family photo album

How to Do It

Play a familiar song while looking through old photographs.

Ask gentle questions such as:

- "Who is this with you?"
- "What do you remember about this day?"
- "Did you enjoy this song?"

If they don't remember, that's okay. Simply enjoy looking at the photos together.

Activity 3 — Gentle Movement

What You'll Need

🎵 Upbeat familiar music

Try

👏 Clapping

👣 Tapping feet

💃 Gentle dancing

👐 Waving hands to the rhythm

Movement should always be comfortable and safe.

Activity 4 — Build a Personal Playlist

Create a playlist using songs from:

- Childhood
- Teenage years
- Wedding
- Church or faith community
- Family celebrations
- Favourite artists
- Holiday traditions

Personalised playlists are often the most meaningful because they reflect the person's life experiences.

Activity 5 — Share Stories Through Songs

Play one familiar song and ask:

- "Did this song remind you of someone?"
- "Did you ever dance to this?"
- "Who used to sing this with you?"
- "What does this song make you feel?"

Some people may tell stories, while others may simply smile or hum along. Both are meaningful responses.

Activity 6 — Relax and Listen Together

Sometimes the best activity is simply sitting together.

Find a quiet place, play calming music, and enjoy the moment without feeling the need to fill every silence.

Being present is often the greatest gift.

Tips for a Positive Experience

- ✓ Choose familiar songs.
- ✓ Keep the volume comfortable.
- ✓ Minimise background noise.
- ✓ Smile and make eye contact.
- ✓ Allow plenty of time to respond.
- ✓ Follow their pace.
- ✓ Celebrate every moment of engagement

Things to Avoid

- ✗ Correcting forgotten memories.
- ✗ Testing memory with questions like: "Don't you remember?"
- ✗ Playing music that is too loud.
- ✗ Overstimulating with too many activities.
- ✗ Rushing through the experience.

Create Your Own Favourite Songs List

My Favourite Artist_____

Favourite Song_____

Favourite Hymn_____

Wedding Song_____

Songs from Childhood_____

Holiday Favourite_____

Special Family Songs_____

Remember

Not every activity will receive the same response every day—and that's okay.

The goal is not to improve memory or achieve a specific outcome, but to create moments of comfort, joy, and meaningful connection.

Sometimes a smile, a tap of the foot, or quietly listening together is enough.

Helpful Resources

Alzheimer's Association – Music & Art

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/art-music>

Learn how music can support people living with dementia and encourage meaningful engagement.

National Institute on Aging – Activities for People with Alzheimer's Disease

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia>

Practical suggestions for engaging activities and caregiving support.

Music & Memory

<https://musicandmemory.org>

Evidence-based information on using personalised music to improve quality of life.

Playlist for Life

<https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk>

Guidance on creating meaningful personal music playlists for people living with dementia.

Alzheimer's Society (UK)

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/music-and-dementia>

Information about how music can help people living with dementia.