



Music, Art and Other Therapies

Music, art, pet and other types of therapies can help enrich the lives of people with Alzheimer's disease. Pets, for instance, have been shown to reduce depression and boost self-esteem. Art provides an outlet for expression. Music stirs memories, emotions and when accompanied by singing, encourages group activity.

Music therapy

Identify music that's familiar and enjoyable to the listeners.

Use live music, tapes or CDs; radio programs, interrupted by too many commercials, can cause confusion.

Use music to create the mood you want.

Link music with other reminiscence activities; use photographs to help stir memories.

Encourage movement (clapping, dancing) to add to the enjoyment.

Avoid sensory overload; eliminate competing noises by shutting windows and doors and by turning off the television.

Art therapy

Keep the project on an adult level. Avoid anything that might be demeaning or seem child-like.

Build conversation into the project. Provide encouragement, discuss what the person is creating and try to initiate a bit of creative storytelling or reminiscence.

Help the person begin the activity. If the person is painting, you may need to start the brush movement. Most other projects should only require basic instruction and assistance.

Use safe materials. Avoid toxic substances and sharp tools.
Allow plenty of time to complete the art project.

The person doesn't have to finish the project in one sitting.

And remember: The artwork is complete when the person says it is.

Pet therapy guidelines

Not everyone will react positively to animals. Those who owned pets previously tend to be more responsive.

Match the animal's activity and energy level with that of the individual. For example, a lively dog might be appropriate for someone who can go out for a walk; a cat may be more appropriate for a person who is less mobile.