

# Music and Dementia...

*Music programs for persons with Dementia can be implemented effectively using the following approaches:*

- Singing / Vocalising
  - Use familiar / favourite songs (offer song choice, compile a list of resident's favourite songs)
  - Use “la, la” and short / staccato vowel sounds and humming to warm up prior to singing.
  - Give good eye contact to residents
  - Know all the lyrics of the songs
- Playing instruments - structured and improvising
  - Choose user friendly, easily cleaned (i.e. plastic) percussion instruments
  - Modeling (echo my sound / rhythm)
  - Mirroring - play how I play at the same time
  - Start / stop one at a time, like a canon
  - Call and response - musical conversation
  - Conducting with hand signals (stop / go, fast / slow, loud / soft etc.)
  - Free Improvisation - provide a song or other musical structure (rhythm and/or melody)
- Music Listening
  - Observe residents response to music to identify preferred listening music
  - Be selective about the time and the way music is played (eg. 1 hour of relaxing music before sleep at the appropriate volume is more effective than the radio played loudly all day (becomes just another background noise)
  - Initiate discussions of reminiscence after songs to encourage long-term memory and verbal processing of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation can be matched with this activity (use a script or CD)
- Dance / move to music
  - Use props such as scarves
  - Use music with a definite accented beat to provide order and predictability (appropriate tempo also important)
  - Other suggestions: conducting with finger / arms, sway to a Waltz, a seated march (same or opposite leg to arm and swinging arms)
- Conduct a choir / band
  - use a consistent approach and learn small parts at a time
  - Ensure everyone knows their role
  - Find out participant's strengths and work with them
  - Start with songs that are easy to learn and sing for a sense of achievement

Links: [www.austmta.org.au](http://www.austmta.org.au)  
[www.mimmotivesinmusic.com.au](http://www.mimmotivesinmusic.com.au)  
[www.vocalist.org.uk](http://www.vocalist.org.uk)

