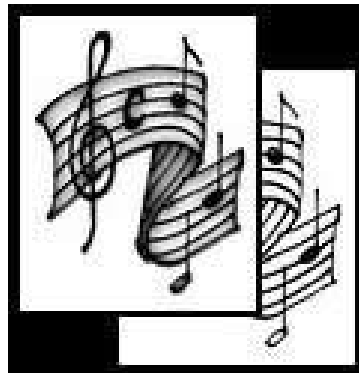


Prescription *Music*

A Philosophy
of Care
Using Music



Written by Linda Toll

Copyright Prescription Music 2009 all rights reserved

**This Guide is dedicated to the
Caregiver in All of Us.**

Care Giver

**I am a giver
I am aware of the gifts
I give**

You are a giver – If you have smiled, shared time or resources, listened.....There are a multitude of gifts to be given – each one spreading ripples in ever widening and overlapping circles of caring.

Foreword

Steve Toll—Director Prescription Music

I have been a musician ever since I can remember. Music has been an integral part of my life and has inspired me in so many ways. Music has helped me to express myself and relate to the world.

When we started working with people suffering from Dementia I had no idea how powerful a tool we all have at our command to affect in such a positive way the quality of life of almost anyone. To be able to connect with another person in such a deep way through the power of music has profoundly inspired and amazed me. To help someone remember who they are, motivate them to participate in a social activity, orient them to their environment and experience joy has become an important mission in my life.

The best part of all is that you do not have to be a musician to integrate music into your life and share it with others. Remember, music is around us all the time. All you need is the intention to harness the healing power of music, make music a part of your life everyday and inspire and motivate others to do the same. Your efforts will spread joy and caring and don't forget.....

“The Prescription is Music”



Preface

Linda Toll

Music is the greatest link to ourselves and between all cultures and unites humanity; it is a form of communication which taps our deepest emotions. Music initiates the dancing of a staff member with a patient, and the subsequent acknowledging of them as a person separate and distinct from their affliction. It teaches visiting family members how to communicate with their loved ones in a “new language of rhythm and song” while creating an opportunity to connect in some small way, a virtual impossibility with any other type of activity; this knowledge often resulting in more frequent and meaningful visits.

Music is part of every known culture predating language. Archeologists have discovered flutes made by Neanderthals living in Eastern Europe more than fifty thousand years ago. In ancient Greece, it was accepted that the connection between body and mind was so close that music was used to calm the mind to heal the body. Additionally, the ancient Greeks were the first to understand the importance of communication between doctor and patient. However, when verbal communication is lost or seriously compromised, we need to call upon alternative techniques. As a non-verbal communication, music is the best language for creating that connection.

On a personal level, music connects us. A mother and child look into each other’s eyes and bond through the singing of a lullaby. As children we bond with our parents through being sung to and rocked. Caring and love are communicated through song enabling us to share who we are with others and to understand someone else. The intrinsic power of the music promotes security and inspires confidence. Music organizes and creates order in our brains, helping us throughout our lives to feel peaceful.

Music is the catalyst for creating a therapeutic healing environment. As the facilitator of a therapeutic music program you become the conduit between the patient and the power of music to promote healing.



Our Inspiration

Prescription – *Music*

was inspired by Grandmother Thelma

Although she died in 2004, just shy of her 97th birthday, Grandmother Thelma’s enthusiasm for life is the legacy which guides our work today.

Born in 1907, she taught school for almost 50 years. The last six years of her life were spent living in a newly built assisted living center in her community where she was the first resident. By that time, her husband, as well as all four siblings had died. Although she mourned the loss of her friends that predeceased her, her grief was compounded for those “lost” to dementia; who no longer recognized her, remembered their shared childhoods or even responded to her letters or phone calls.

Visits to her in her new “home” always included music and singing. As a teacher, music comprised a large part of her approach to teaching. This was especially critical to her success with her Special Education classes. The power of music was made evident in school assemblies where all children participated often linking arms, swaying in time with the music to sing familiar songs.

When we would sing and play the guitar or sometimes the piano in the activity room at Gram’s facility, it wasn’t long before the room was filled with residents drawn to the familiar sounds. People with all levels of physical and cognitive functioning, as well as staff and visitors joined in to sing, sometimes dance, often laughing and smiling. Looking across the room one felt the unifying and healing atmosphere that dominated. It soon became apparent that the power of music applies not just to school children, but is universal in its innate quality to bring people together, regardless of language, culture or presumed differences.

The feelings that were generated in that room are captured in one of the last pictures we have of Grandmother Thelma with arms open, accepting, embracing and caring – all the ingredients for healing. In our work, we know that while a cure for Alzheimer’s is sought, healing can occur when **Intention** is focused on reaching through the disease to connect with a fellow human.

Music—A Universal Force

Whether it is the thundering passion of a hundred drummers at an ancient ceremonial rite or the powerful performance of a solo artist on a modern day stage, music is integral to life and universal to the experience of being human. In fact if you want to understand the human condition, you cannot ignore something as essential as music.

First There Was Sound

The primal nature of rhythm; the wellspring of music, predates nations and even civilizations. It is born in the first sounds of a mother's heartbeat echoing the rhythms of life to her unborn child. At birth, when separated from this environment many newborns experience great anxiety which is alleviated when placed in its mother's arms for the first time and the familiar universal rhythmic environment is restored. This "power of the beat" cascading through the ages, unites mankind whether in the hypnotic chants of prehistoric people or the nurturing cocoon enveloping the child rocked and sung to sleep.

"Music" transcends the human experience existing in the outer reaches of the universe. Recently Nasa astronomers have detected the deepest note ever generated in the cosmos, a B-flat flying through space like a ripple on an invisible pond. No human will actually hear the note, because it is 57 octaves below the keys in the middle of a piano.

Music – Way Beyond Words

Language itself is rhythmically based and from the beginning as expressed through chanting and drumming resembled music more closely than speech. Music is primal to life and expressed by each of us every day whether through dancing to a favorite tune, keeping rhythm with a pencil or remembering a special time when hearing a forgotten melody. Music is central to our lives, embedded in our culture defining, transforming and inspiring us.

Music and song embrace and sustain us throughout our journey in life, present in our celebrations, marking passages and milestones, strengthening us with courage when we are fearful and despairing. Music helps to answer questions of who we are, what we stand for and value, comforting us individually and bringing us together collectively. Music helps us to wordlessly understand ourselves and others, to console when there are no words and to create ways to communicate when through disability or other barriers, language alone is not possible. And although you may be "at a loss for words", not know what to say or when "words just can't express" your true feelings, music is always there to communicate the inexpressible and to free the mind from the boundaries of speech and ordinary thought to expand to an alternate place of emotion, rhythm and imagery. Words may desert us, but music is always present – like a heartbeat, linking us to our world and providing a pathway back "home" .



Music to the Rescue

Today Alzheimer's or a related dementia affects 10 percent of people over the age of 65 and 40 percent of people over age 85. Not included in these statistics are the many thousands or more, who fearing the diagnosis of Alzheimer's attempt to hide their failing mental abilities. Add to this the aging of the baby boomer generation and you may well understand the depiction of this impending epidemic as a "medical Tsunami."

Accounting for over 70%, Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. The disease is marked by severe impairment in cognitive function, including deficits in both long and short-term memory, loss of language recognition, speech, judgment, personality and thinking.

Music has an effect on people with dementia which at times appears almost magical. Individuals that don't speak, sing and keep rhythm to songs from decades in their past. Others who have difficulty walking are able to dance. Scientific research has confirmed that the area of the brain where musical memories are stored is one of the last to deteriorate. This explains why individuals who rarely speak will often spontaneously sing when a familiar song is played and those who experience trouble walking are often motivated to stand or dance in place.

Music is shown to have the ability to help organize the brain; especially vital to those who are afflicted with Alzheimer's. Usually after twenty minutes of music, there are observable affects, such as singing, foot tapping, and clapping. Studies have shown, as well as our own findings, that the results of a therapeutic music session last for several hours afterward. Positive results include elevated mood, increased socialization and appetite and reduction in agitation. These benefits are attributed to the stimulation the brain receives during a therapeutic music session, a sort of "cognitive workout" inspiring us to coin the phrase, **"What exercise is to the body, music is to the brain"**. The power of music naturally inspires physical movement and this combination of music and movement dramatically increases the positive affects to the brain as well as improving the patient's confidence. This underscores the importance of encouraging movement while listening to music.

The powers of music when focused and used therapeutically are many—those receiving the "therapy" do not feel like patients and the "treatment" is actually enjoyable and fun for everyone. Critical to improving Quality of Life for those with Alzheimer's is preserving the connection with others. Music is conducive to keeping those connections strong as long as possible while helping the patient to focus, increase awareness and orient to the environment. As speech, writing and other traditional forms of communication are comprised, music provides an alternative means of communication. A number of research studies have looked at therapeutic music as an important adjunct to medical treatment and findings suggest a possible link between the use of music and slowing the progression of dementia.