

NEW MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

Shelley Evans, MT-BC, ADC, CDP

The evolution of new music technology has greatly enhanced the opportunities for activity staff to provide person-centered care. Many of the music libraries in long term care facilities are filled with records, cassette tapes, and CDs. With the invention of the iPod®, we now have the tool to provide on the spot person-centered music choices to all of our residents, especially the baby boomer population. If you have not already purchased an iPod® for your facility, know that the cost will pay for itself in the activities you will be able to provide. By not having one, you are missing a wonderful opportunity to interact with your residents. Since the brain stores information in different areas, music is separate from language, therefore an individual who can not express speech may be able to sing songs.

As the recreation / activity assessments are completed, take the time to ask specific music preferences including favorite songs. Downloads for songs on iTunes® are 99¢. You can make a mix of songs that enhance one's opportunity for self-expression in an exercise group. Select songs sung by different performers and compare them for a music interest group.

At no cost, you can offer an iTunes® Name that Tune activity. Each song in iTunes® can be selected to play for 30 seconds, for free. It is as simple as selecting the artist, selecting the song, and clicking on that song's title. This group can be theme-specific. For example, one session could be commercial jingles and the next, pop songs of the 1980s. This activity is a perfect tool for bedside visits. Provide the opportunity for reminiscence and watch for recognition in the residents' eyes. This new technology provides the opportunity to measure success.

Speakers on your computer are required, or you can purchase external speakers for the computer to give you the opportunity to hear the songs chosen. Take the iPod® with you to all of your programs and play it on an iPod® dock. This allows you to put it in a portable speaker system, and you can charge the iPod® in some systems, as well. Person-centered care is vital for quality care. It is expensive to replace the vinyl records and cassettes. There are tools available to have the music from cassettes put into an MP3 format, and it may be an option for those with a limited budget. These can now be stored in your music library to put on the iPod®.

You can also take your CDs and put them in your iTunes® library by playing / storing them in your computer / iPod® files. iPod® download cards can be purchased in increments of \$15 to \$100. By downloading only the songs you want on a CD, this is a cash savings in the long run.

The opportunities are endless, and we need to be ready with new music technology for each person who walks through our door.

Shelley is the Director of Long Term Care Therapies at DeMay Living Center in Newark, NY. She worked for 10 years with individuals with mental health diagnoses before beginning work in long term care in 2000. CF