**The Sound of Aging Well: How Seniors Connect with Music for Healing**

Music is one of the oldest and most powerful tools that humans use to sustain life. It has been used in many ways throughout our history, but today music therapy is perhaps its most important use. Music therapy can help seniors maintain their physical health, emotional stability, mental capacities and more, and we're here today to show you how.

What is music therapy?

The idea of music as a healing influence which could affect health and behavior is as least as old as the writings of Aristotle and Plato. The first music therapy degree program in the world, founded at Michigan State University in 1944, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1994. The American Music Therapy Association was founded in 1998 as a union of the National Association for Music Therapy and the American Association for Music therapy. According to them, "Music Therapy is the clinical & evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals." It is a tool accessible to all ages and all walks of life because of those individualized goals, which range from managing stress, improving non-verbal communication, and expressing feelings, enhancing memory, and even physical rehabilitation.

How does music therapy work?

Depending on the goal of each session, the approach varies. If you're looking to manage stress, calming music that evokes positive memories can lower blood pressure and improve breathing rate. To improve non-verbal communication and express feelings, dance classes or routines found on popular YouTube videos can teach you how to move your body in new ways to express yourself. Those dance classes and routines can also serve as a form of physical rehabilitation and fun exercise and have become increasingly popular for individuals with Parkinson's. Music is usually an integral part of our lives and therefore songs are heavily associated with memories. For seniors with dementia, music can be used to enhance and strengthen their memory, and on occasion can help trigger memories that were once thought lost.

Where can I find a qualified music therapist?

Persons who complete one of the approved college music therapy curricula (including an internship) are then eligible to sit for the national examination offered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists. Music therapists who successfully complete the independently administered examination hold the music therapist-board certified credential (MT-BC). You can find a list of local certified members here: https://www.cbmt.org/find-a-therapist/.

Music therapy is just one of the many tools we have at our disposal to offer optimal care and improve quality of life for our senior loved ones. You can learn more about music therapy on the American Music Therapy Association website (https://www.musictherapy.org/) or contact a care manager today to see how music therapy can be implemented into a unique care plan for your senior.

Even if you decide not to bring music therapy into your aging parents’ life, you can still expose them to experiences with music by creating playlists of songs that they listened to as a younger person and helping them listen to the playlists. If you’re interested in this topic and the power of music, please check out the movie, **Alive Inside: A Story of Music and Memory**, which is available to rent on Amazon Prime.