

*And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs  
And as silently steal away.*

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Day Is Done

For more information on music therapy,  
or to find a music therapist in your area, contact:

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# From Mozart to Mick Jagger – Healing Through Music



Although Eliason believes music therapy can be used to help us with many aspects of our lives, her recent focus has been on using music to help people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

“Most people can relate to music. It affects our mood; it stimulates thought; it can connect people to their spirituality; it promotes relaxation and stress reduction; and it allows people to reminisce,” she said.

Eliason said one of the most important attributes of music is that it triggers memories, and enables people to keep a beautiful connection with their loved one, through those memories.

Marlene Jackson, a music therapist, and the Bereavement Coordinator with Palliative Care Services in the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region, has also seen the benefits of music in dealing with loss.

“Grief can be very confusing. There are so many emotions coming at you. Sometimes people don’t have the words to express how they are feeling – music can sometimes say it for you,” she said.

Music therapists work with patients to help them address their grief, both by creating music, or by listening to it. The therapy sessions are often one-on-one with a therapist, but can also be part of a grief support group. The type of music used in the sessions depends upon the tastes of the patient.

Jackson and Eliason believe that both listening to music and creating it can play an important role in the healing process. While listening to music can assist people in sorting through their feelings, the creation of music can assist us in releasing pent-up and often confusing emotions.

“We use music as a therapeutic tool to help people with different aspects of their lives. Music is universal – people can connect with music if it resonates with them. It enables us to express and experience our emotions safely, in times when they are often too difficult or painful to express or experience on our own,” said Jackson.

Eliason said that in addition to helping individuals deal with their grief, music is also used to help them learn how to live again. Patients are encouraged to incorporate upbeat music into a regular exercise routine to motivate physical activity.

But music therapy isn’t used only to assist people who are grieving. The Canadian Association for Music Therapy website suggests this therapy can be effective in addressing: acquired brain injury, AIDS, autism, developmental disabilities, emotional traumas, geriatric care, hearing impairments, mental health, neonatal care, obstetrics, oncology, pain control, palliative care, speech and language impairments, substance abuse, victims of abuse, visual impairments and more.

Eliason says that anyone who believes music could assist them in dealing with health issues should begin incorporating music into their lives. She advises being deliberate in the music selected, and setting time aside to actively listen to music for relaxation purposes.

Music can have a huge impact on your emotional and physical health, your general outlook, and your ability to experience life.

Whether you’re a musical virtuoso, or have a “tin” ear; and whether you love opera or Alice Cooper, involving music in your life can significantly impact your overall health.

Music has been integral to life almost since the beginning of time. However, few of us really understand the important role music can play in our health. The healing attributes of music were recognized as early as the times of Plato and Aristotle. But it wasn’t until the 1940’s, that the first ever music therapy degree program was initiated at Michigan State University.

“Music therapy takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. We help people work towards their own specific goals, using music as the tool,” said Ruth Eliason, Music Therapist with Palliative Care Services in the Saskatoon Health Region.