

Dementia and the Power of Music



Many studies have been conducted on the power of music for people living with dementia, but a 2022 study published in the journal *Alzheimer Disease and Associated Disorders* called “Musical Bridges to Memory” was unique, targeting both dementia patients and the caregivers who support them.

The research’s lead author, Dr Borna Bonakdarpour, Associate Professor of Neurology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine explained, “music memories often remain in the brain even as language and other memories disappear in dementia. This is because regions of the brain that are involved in musical memory and processing (e.g., the cerebellum) are not as affected by Alzheimer’s or dementia until much later in the disease course. Thus, patients can retain the ability to dance and sing long after their ability to talk has diminished.” Bondarpour notes: “Our preliminary data

show that music can help with improving social engagement between a person with dementia and their loved ones. It can also decrease stress levels in care partners.”

Alzheimer Society of BC, OneSky Community Resources, and the Penticton & District Community Arts Council have partnered with the Penticton Academy of Music & Dramatic Arts (PADMA) to deliver a **free weekly group singalong for people living with dementia and their caregivers.**

Every Thursday afternoon, a PAMDA volunteer picks up the guitar or ukulele and leads attendees through the songbook, which contains singalong favourites, such as *Tennessee Waltz*, *King of the Road*, and *You Are My Sunshine*. Afterwards, attendees socialize over refreshments.

And no one even needs to sing. Just come along and have a nice time. After all, the research also shows that simply listening to music can reduce anxiety and improve your mood.

This free event is offered every Thursday from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm in the Community Art Room at the Leir House Cultural Centre, 220 Manor Park Avenue, where there’s easy access and on-site parking.

To register or for more information, please call Gail, the Caregiver Support Program Coordinator, at OneSky Community Resources at 250-488-7455.