

# MUSIC THERAPY IN THE CONTINUUM OF GERIATRIC CARE



**PROSPECT**  
MUSIC THERAPY

# EVELYN LEE, MUSIC THERAPIST

- Registered Music Therapist (Australia)
- Bachelors in Music and Psychology, University of Queensland
- Masters in Music Therapy, University of Melbourne
- Previous President of Association for Music Therapy Association
  
- Project coordinator for a major community music grant project for Chinese-speaking older adults in Melbourne
- Special School for severe intellectual and physical disabilities
- Acute hospital serving neurological rehabilitation and dementia wards



# AGEING IN SINGAPORE: “GOLD STANDARD”

No Major  
Diseases

No Disability

High  
Cognitive  
Functioning

High Physical  
Functioning

Active  
Engagement  
with Life

Subramaniam, M., Abdin, E., Vaingankar, J. A., Sambasivam, R., Seow, E., Picco, L., ... & Chong, S. A. (2019). Successful ageing in Singapore: prevalence and correlates from a national survey of older adults. *Singapore medical journal*, 60(1), 22.



PROSPECT  
MUSIC THERAPY

# AGEING IN SINGAPORE – FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING (GWEE, 2013)

Physical and  
Cognitive  
wellbeing

Harmonious  
family relations

Meaningful social  
engagement and  
network

Adaptation and  
emotional  
wellness

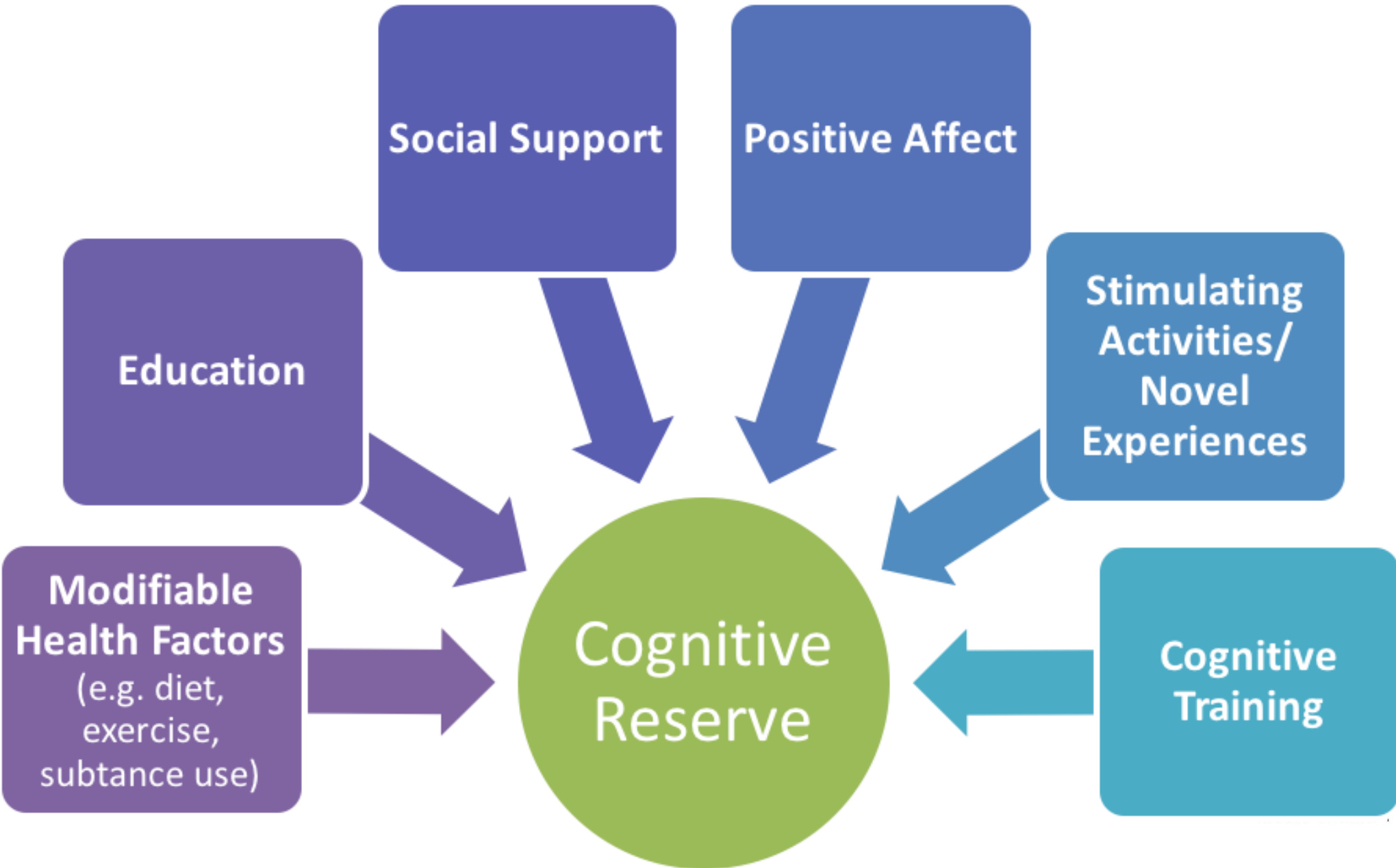
Spirituality

Sufficient  
financial  
resources and  
autonomy

Gwee X. Ageing well: studies of its global and multidomain and construct among multi-ethnic Singaporean seniors (doctoral thesis). 2013; Singapore National University of Singapore.



PROSPECT  
MUSIC THERAPY



# COGNITIVE RESERVE — THE RESILIENT BRAIN

- When a person with high cognitive reserve experiences cognitive decline, cognitive compensation occurs
  - alternate connections and problem-solving strategies

**How can we increase cognitive reserve across the entire lifespan with the goal of positive and healthy cognitive aging?**

# SOME MUSIC OPTIONS AVAILABLE OUT THERE

## *Karaoke*

Performance style of singing, accompanied by rich musical textures and lyrics provided by teleprompter

## *Music Playlists*

Unsupervised music listening on iPod, playlist curated based on current interest.

## *Music Technolog*

Using electronic gadgets to create sounds, choreographed by facilitator to make music



A photograph showing four hands of different ages and skin tones being held together in a supportive grip. The hands are stacked, with the youngest and lightest-skinned hands at the top and the oldest and darkest-skinned hands at the bottom. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**USING MUSIC & MUSIC EXPERIENCES WITHIN**

**THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP TO ADDRESS**

**Physical Mental Emotional Social Communicative**



# APPROACH TO DEMENTIA MUSIC THERAPY

- Music Therapy is encouraged in the care for dementia and helps in decreasing behavioural symptoms of Dementia (MOH Clinical Practice Guidelines for Dementia 2013, pg. 8)
- Based on related fields:
  - Person-Centered Care
  - Reminiscence Therapy
  - Validation Therapy
- Individualized goals are addressed within a group setting.

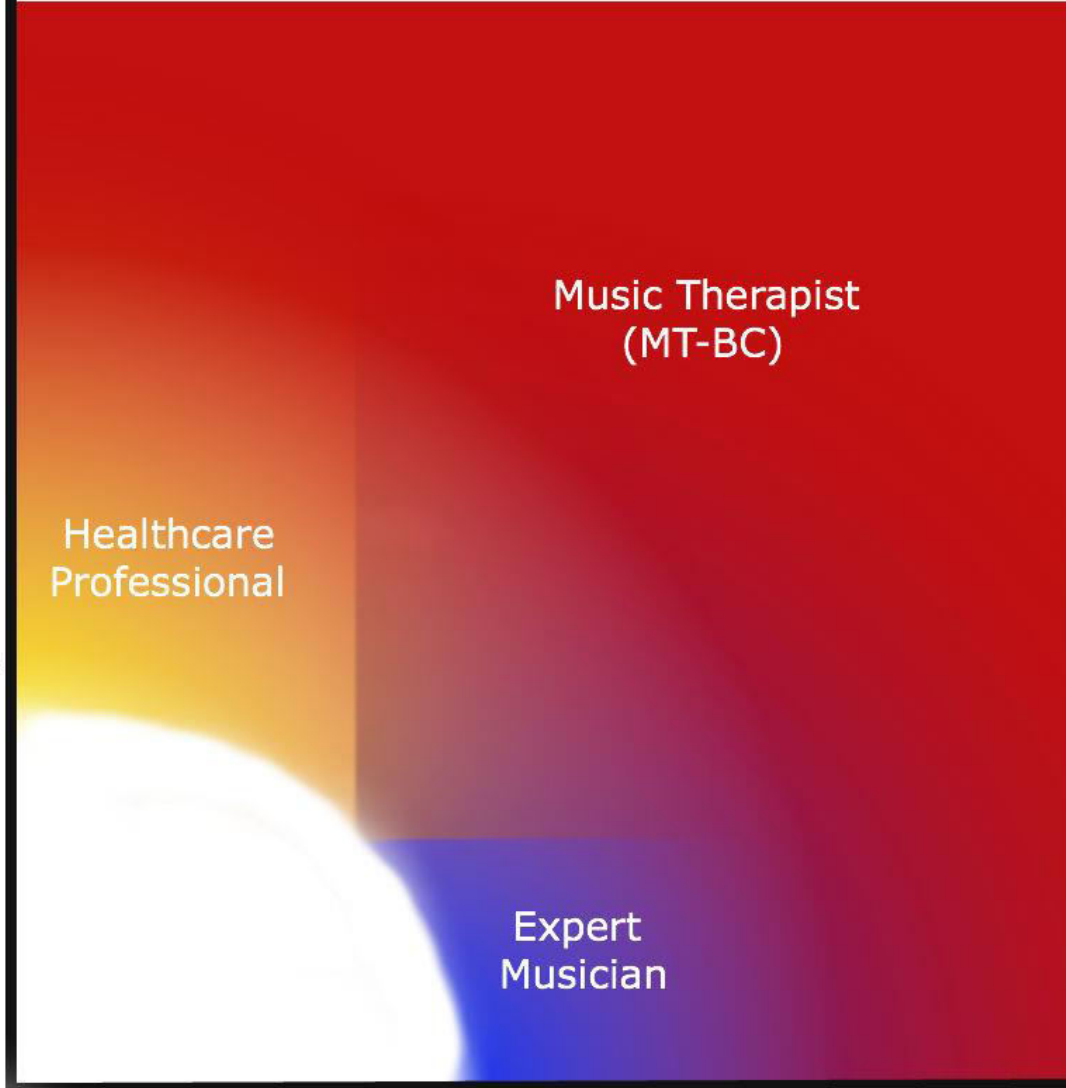
Advanced dementia  
Severe autism  
Stroke with aphasia  
TBI  
Severe mental illness

Moderate depression  
Complicated grief  
Chronic pain

Mild dementia  
Situational anxiety  
Normal grief

High functioning

**Therapeutic Need**



Listening to music  
Attend concerts

Learn a new instrument  
Group drumming  
Dance lessons

Music  
psychotherapy  
Guided Imagery and  
Music  
Music wellness  
classes

*Who Supports Your Soundscape?*



|                                 | Group Music Therapy   | Recreational Choir Singing  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Common Principal and Intentions | Use and support remaining faculty of musical reminiscence. Support social experience, stimulate social and emotional well-being. Tailored to individuals. |   |
| Core Principles                 | Affect regulation and attunement<br>Meet psychosocial needs<br>Empathic relationship.   | Sing familiar songs, learn new songs<br>Cognitive activation Focus on melody, lyrics and rhythm.                                |
| Core Intentions                 | Facilitate and improve communication.<br>Reduce behavioral and psychological symptoms through regulation of emotions.                                     | Facilitate positive experience of self and others.<br>Stimulate expression, semantic autobiographic memory and positive affect. |
| Suitability                     | All levels of dementia, but may be divided to form homogeneous groups.  | All levels of dementia, but primarily mild to moderate dementia; mixed groups possible (inclusiveness).                         |
| Group size                      | 5 - 8   | 10 - 15   |
| Qualification of facilitator    | Music therapy degree; skilled musician; member of professional music therapy association or registration body.  | Skilled musician, choir leading skills and relevant further training  |



How can we adapt the same dish to different needs?

# ELEMENTS OF MUSIC THERAPY

- Acknowledging strengths and limitations of clients
- Giving them time and space for autonomy
- Always aware of the goals of clients, meeting where they are at
- Manipulating music elements at any one point if necessary
- Spending time to establish therapeutic relationship with each client



# POSSIBLE MUSIC INTERVENTIONS TO USE

- Music Making (Drumming, Singing, etc.)
- Lyric Discussion
- Movement & Music
- Song Writing
- Creative Arts to Music
- Musical Games



# PILOT PROGRAM SAMPLE OUTLINE

| Session | Description  | Data Collected  |
|---------|--|---|
| 1 & 2   | Assessment and Observation<br>(only for pilot program)   | Background information & current functioning level  |
| 3 – 10  | Treatment Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Song Singing</li><li>- Song Discussion</li><li>- Music and Movement</li><li>- Improvisation</li></ul> | Pre/Post-session self-rated scales <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mood level</li><li>- Anxiety level</li></ul> |
| 11 & 12 | Closure and Evaluation of goals  | Narrative report on group progress  |

- Term-based programs allow periodic evaluation of goals, and allow participants to drop in / drop out.
- Group size: 4 – 10 members
- Duration: 60 – 90 mins

# 2 participants

*Competing programs:  
Karaoke Drop-in session  
Rummy-O gaming session*

# 15 participants

*Core group of participants who  
attend the weekly groups regularly*



PROSPECT  
MUSIC THERAPY



# *Relationship Building Process*

## *At the Beginning*

Justifying the use of good instruments to management  
Learning their names  
"Building a relationship one day at a time"



## *Communication, Empowerment*

Psychoeducation provided each week on the social and neurological benefits of music making.  
Discussing and planning sessions based on their input.



## *Developing Agency*

Helping participants understand how their growth within music therapy, can be used to motivate them to face life's challenges



# Sample Session Plan

**FOCUSED ON ENGAGEMENT AND INSIGHT**



Psychoeducation:  
Building synapses  
within our brains by  
attempting new  
tasks



Song Singing:  
Selecting 1 song  
each week to learn  
and commit to  
memory



Instrumental Jam:  
Assembling drums  
and percussion and  
improvise freely



Reflection:  
Reviewing their  
'performance'  
together. Listening to  
their feedback



**PROSPECT**  
MUSIC THERAPY

# Outcomes

## WHAT WAS SIGNIFICANT?

---

### *Being in Flow*

Sessions may be challenging, but they perceive tasks as "not impossible"

### *Daring to try*

More likely to trust the process and attempt new tasks each week.

### *Ownership*

Began to make plans on future directions and performance opportunities

### *Belonging*

Finding a place of belonging and tolerance for participants of all abilities.



# Initial Barriers of Entry

## WHAT WAS CHALLENGING?

### *Perceived ability*

Participants reported that a lack in formal music education meant they could not participate

### *Anxiety*

Anxiety around no lyric sheets or learning new songs. Sought safety in karaoke teleprompter

### *No Intrinsic Purpose*

Did not know why they should join the course, many other programs available

### *Silos*

Participants belonged to cliques which hardly mingled beyond their group of 3-4 friends



# Practical Strategies

## *Encourage live music and singing from memory*

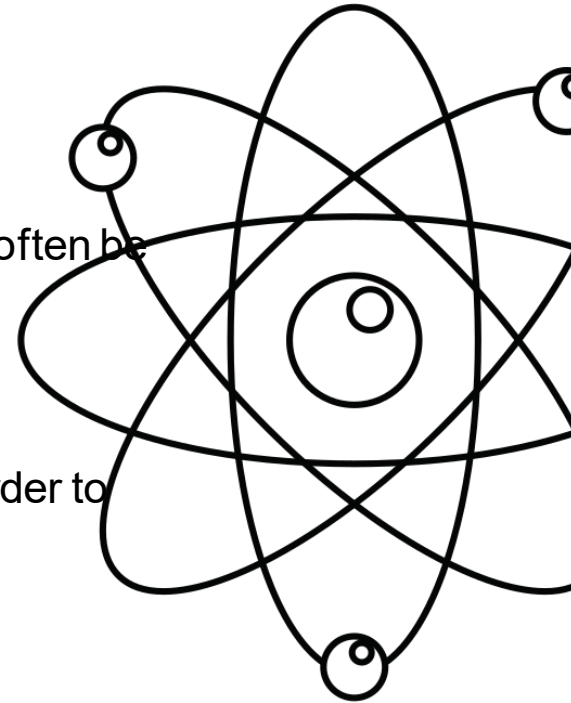
Starting with the chorus, or singing just the first two stanza of songs can often be enough. Maximise participation

## *Facilitator would need to learn the music by heart*

In order to focus on the participants, the songs should be well learnt in order to devote your full attention to them.

## *Seek participants' input for ideas*

Rapport is built when we listen to them, before implementing anything.



PROSPECT  
MUSIC THERAPY

**ALWAYS HAPPY TO ARRANGE A MEETING OR A  
SITE VISIT TO YOUR CENTRE, OR ANY QUESTIONS**

**EVELYN@PROSPECTMUSICTHERAPY.COM**