

## Stories to illustrate these principles

One lady replied 'On Saturday we have green peas' to every thing I said as if the gramophone needle was stuck None of the usual methods worked but singing a well known chorus from her childhood with which she joined in singing all was well again and she could talk perfectly well again.

I visited a couple and while the husband was making tea I chatted way then asked how long she had been there, immediately apologised at being so stupid and how I should have known better She laughed ( good!) so I turned my back on her and chatted about the pictures on her wall and after a while heard a voice behind me telling me where they had bought the picture and why, I did not turn round as I knew that might 'freeze her' When her husband came in and I told him about the picture he almost dropped the tray!

A husband told me his wife had stopped talking so I went to see them at the end of a musical session, sat with her and said how lovely it had been and what fun to sing old songs she agreed and I mentioned a few and eventually she joined in the conversation and then chatted away.

At a dementia function many were sitting slumped in their chairs, unresponsive, when somebody started playing dance music on the piano, and to my utter surprise, first one, then another got out of their chairs and started jiving, then sat down and started to talk about old memories!

## References

Henry:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FWn4JB2YLU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FWn4JB2YLU)

Singing & Music:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/dementia/dementia-and-music/>

Faith & Dementia:

<https://www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk/spiritual-care-and-dementia/>

Laughter:

<https://www.alz.org/media/cacentral/Dementia-Care-58-Humor-Helps-Maintain-Dignity.pdf>

Movement:

<https://www.scie.org.uk/dementia/living-with-dementia/keeping-active/movement-exercise.asp>



*Dr Jennifer Bute is a retired GP, diagnosed with dementia aged 63. She is a campaigner and regular speaker at events. Through her Christian faith she sees dementia as a Glorious Opportunity while acknowledging the challenges it brings. Jennifer is able to provide a doctor's perspective on dementia, while experiencing it from the inside.*

[www.gloriousopportunity.org](http://www.gloriousopportunity.org)



Those living with dementia can forget words, and the sounds of the words separate from their meanings so often they are unaware they are not making sense.

There are 7 main ways to get speech put together again, tying up the loose ends to enable someone to speak:

1. Music
2. Singing
3. Dancing/Movement
4. Laughter
5. Convergent
6. Parallel
7. Faith Traditions

I have found these 7 methods work for the residents where I live, many of whom have dementia.

## Music



Musical awareness and enjoyment seem to remain with those living with dementia until the end, and can be very comforting. Music releases emotion and brings back memories.

Some even find that activities paired with particular music can enable them to be carried out more successfully.

Music is also used to improve mood and bring enjoyment. It improves cognitive function and often enables speech. Music stimulates the right side of the brain.

## Singing

Singing stimulates the left side for the brain so music and singing work well together.

There is a lovely clip on the internet of Henry with Oliver Sachs providing the commentary, showing how Henry comes alive and is able to speak for several minutes after listening to his favourite music and songs.

I have found that after singing some who appear unable to talk can read aloud with everyone else and then speak for a while. And singing a familiar song from their childhood can free them too.

## Dancing/Movement

Many with dementia come alive with dancing, familiar from years past, often ballroom dancing. Perhaps it is a combination of familiar music and movement - a 'past pattern' such as walking can facilitate speech.

## Laughter



Laughter stimulates the production of chemicals in the brain that make us feel good. After a good laugh, many with dementia can tell stories from their past with ease and there is much evidence for overall benefit and they talk much more easily.

## Faith Traditions

Some just hearing the start of the Lord's prayer can finish it aloud by themselves. Ruth used to get very disturbed but starting to recite the 23rd Psalm would calm her down as she joined in. Other faith traditions that are engrained in feelings of worth and belonging to a community, together with the spiritual also do this.

## Convergent

If someone with dementia is talking in 'word salads', try reflecting back the emotions being used and repeating any word that makes sense. Often after a while more recognisable words can be heard which can then be used by yourself. It may take some considerable time but I have seen those considered not able to talk, then be able to speak several perfectly understandable sentences that everyone can understand.

## Parallel



Sometimes someone who is not communicating by words has 'frozen inside' for some reason and turning away from them to talk about something nearby can release them. Often if we are asked a factual question or are

anxious or do not know who someone is, this can cause us to freeze inside but remembering with us or enquiring about feelings can help us along.

When someone gets stuck on a particular phrase, continue talking to them as if they are making sense as they might not realise that they are 'stuck'. Try very hard not to ask questions!