

River of Life and Death:

Helping library users navigate the bereavement process

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Objectives & Takeaways

- ▶ Explore concepts of mortality through programming and the idea that end-of-life does not need to be a controversial or intimidating subject for libraries.
- ▶ Acquire tools to assist library users when dealing with grief, anxiety, and stressful situations.
- ▶ Get ideas for programming through collaboration with other agencies.

Mortality

Tools

Process

MORTALITY

- ▶ Chronic and Terminal Illness
- ▶ Sudden loss
- ▶ Caregiving for the dying
- ▶ Aging
- ▶ Preparation for End of Life
- ▶ Grief

TOOLS

- ▶ Making Health Care decisions
- ▶ Legal documents
- ▶ Library resources including digital, video, online, large type...
- ▶ Community professionals
- ▶ Public space as safe space

PROCESS

- ▶ Within the branch
- ▶ Within the system
- ▶ Civic groups
- ▶ Health care and counseling agencies
- ▶ Discussions, links, materials, programming
- ▶ Opening up conversations for people who need information

Resources coming together

“Every day in the United States, 10,000 people are turning 65. That will continue happening for the next 15 years—producing a major demographic shift and a corresponding explosion in the need for library services to older adults.” - *American Libraries Magazine*, May 2016



“Older Americans constitute a significant and growing segment of library users, but in many ways the services they expect—collections, programs, continuing education, and community gathering—are traditional services of the library...libraries need to develop innovative practices to meet unique the unique circumstances of the older population.” - *American Library Association, Outreach Resources for Service to Older Adults.*

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River of Life

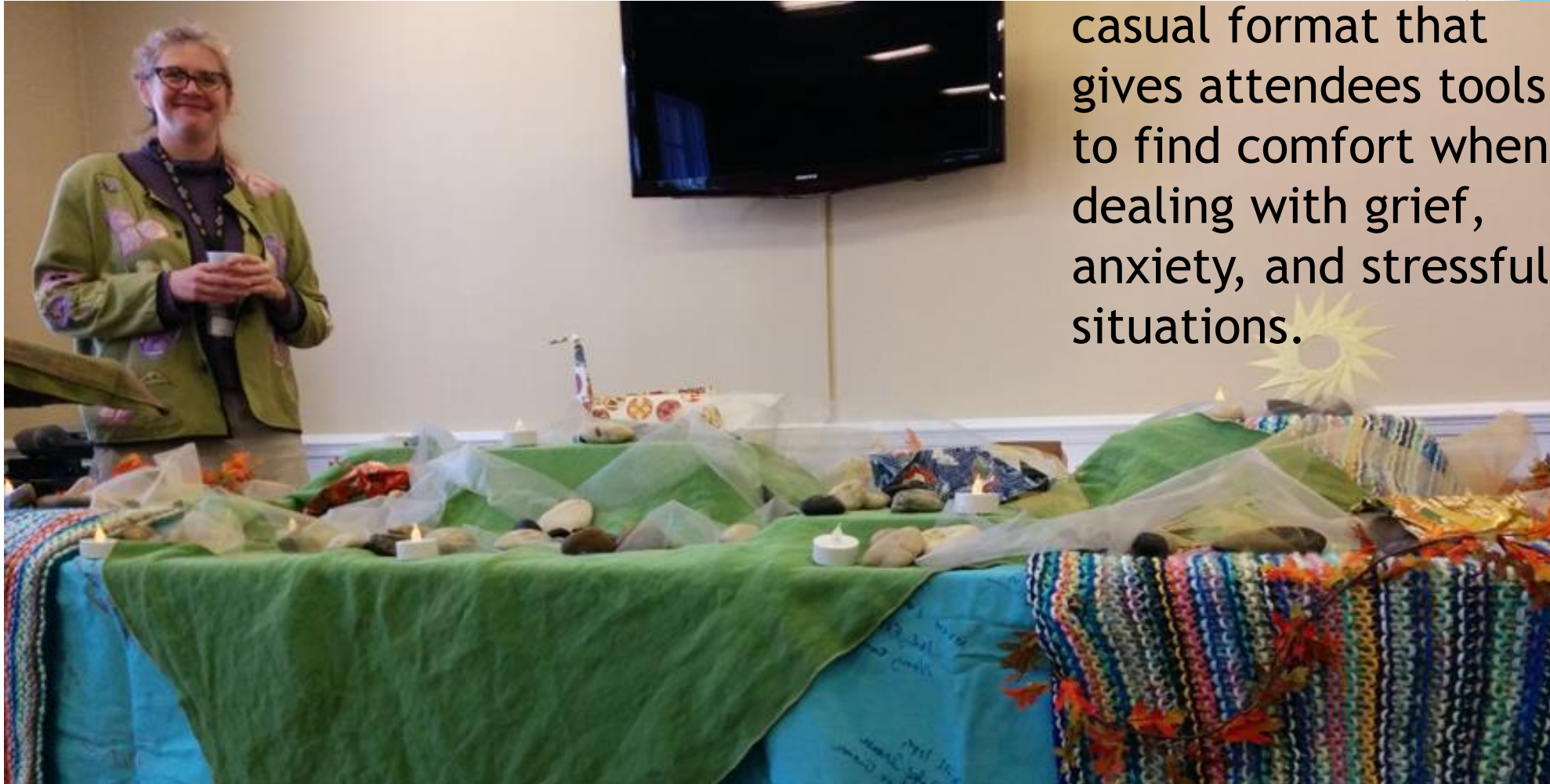


For elders (men and women in their 80's and 90's), general disconnected feelings of isolation make **human connection even more precious**. In a community living environment, it is especially critical to offer ways to connect to each other and ways to re-connect with themselves.

When we offer our elders ways to cope with anxiety, grief, and stress, **we are serving their whole being**. Just as basic needs such as meals and medications must be met, addressing the heart and soul of a person completes the integration of wellness.

River of Life

Incorporates elements of storytelling and reminiscing, in a casual format that gives attendees tools to find comfort when dealing with grief, anxiety, and stressful situations.



River of Life

“The River of Life Program uniquely combines spiritual and sensory touchstones to provoke conversation and introduce methods to find comfort when dealing with grief, anxiety, and stressful situations.” - [Lisa Mullens](#), Activity and Wellness Director, Spring Arbor of Richmond



River of Life



“The program gave wonderful guidance on how to handle conditions and recognize it as a pattern to life. How it related the personal issues to each one of us and how to be more objective was very inspiring.” - Roslyn Oliveri, Activities Director, Saint Mary’s Woods Retirement Community

Death Café

Open and friendly discussions
about death and dying.



A **Death Cafe** is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counseling session.

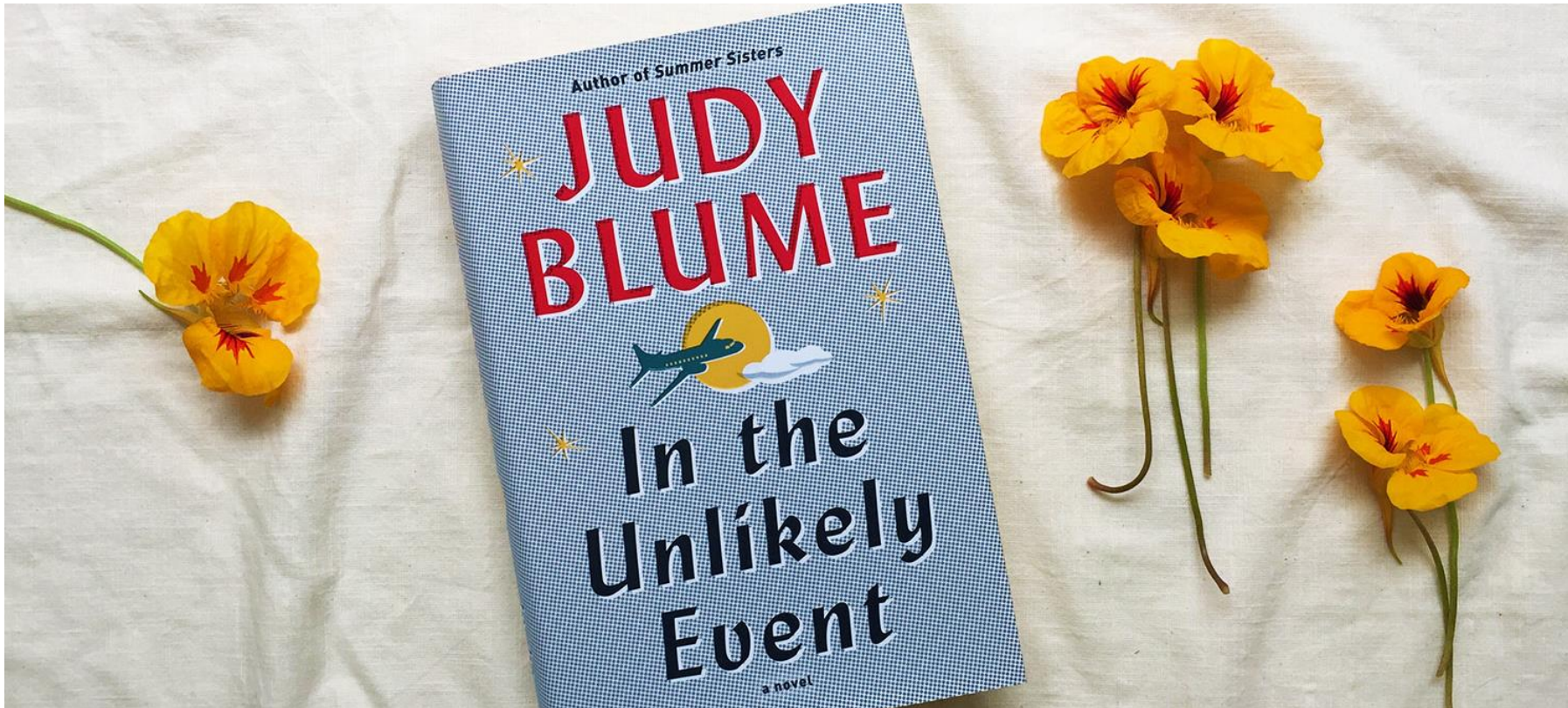
“Death café discussions are empathetic and upbeat. The conversations ranged from funeral homes to when to call to hospice to how to help a grieving father. Everyone went away with a smile and thanked us for offering the program.” - Kara Rothman, Tuckahoe Library Manager



How to Create a Death Cafe

- Discuss need with your branch staff
- Solicit support from a death professional or several
- Schedule your Death Café at a season that coincides with common interests (Heart Disease Awareness, Health Care Choices Day, etc.)
- Schedule the event at a time that is convenient for retired people as well as those working
- Get commitments from staff to support
- Marketing at least six weeks in advance
- Register your event on www.deathcafe.com
- Bring snacks!
- Encourage cooperation from community agencies



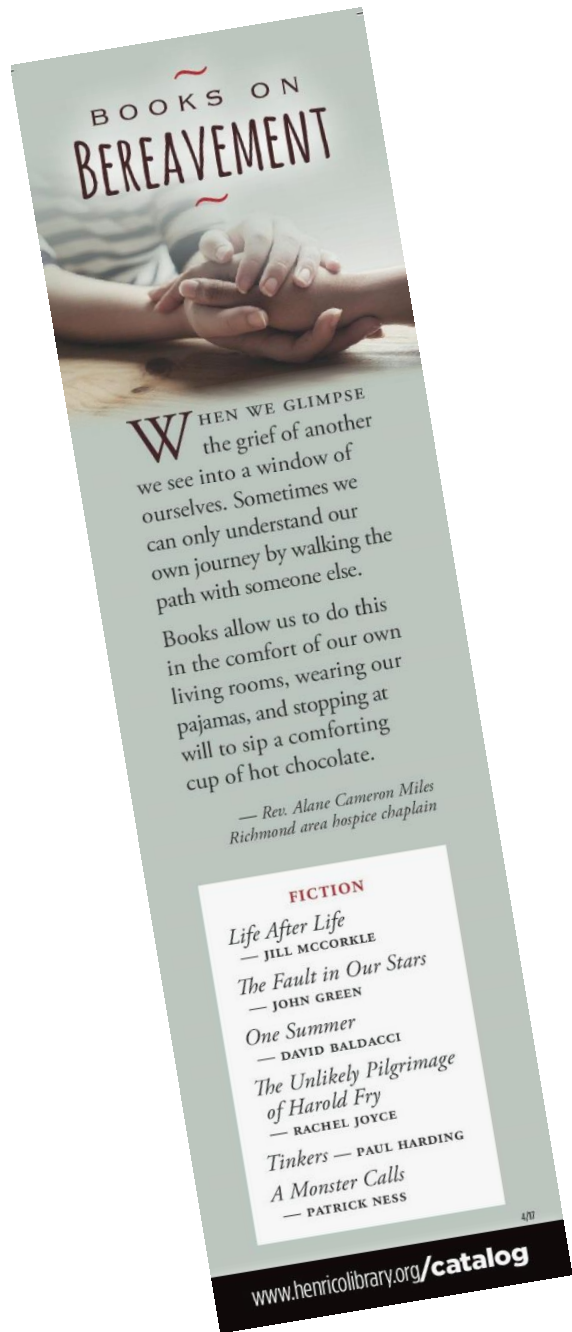


Book Clubs

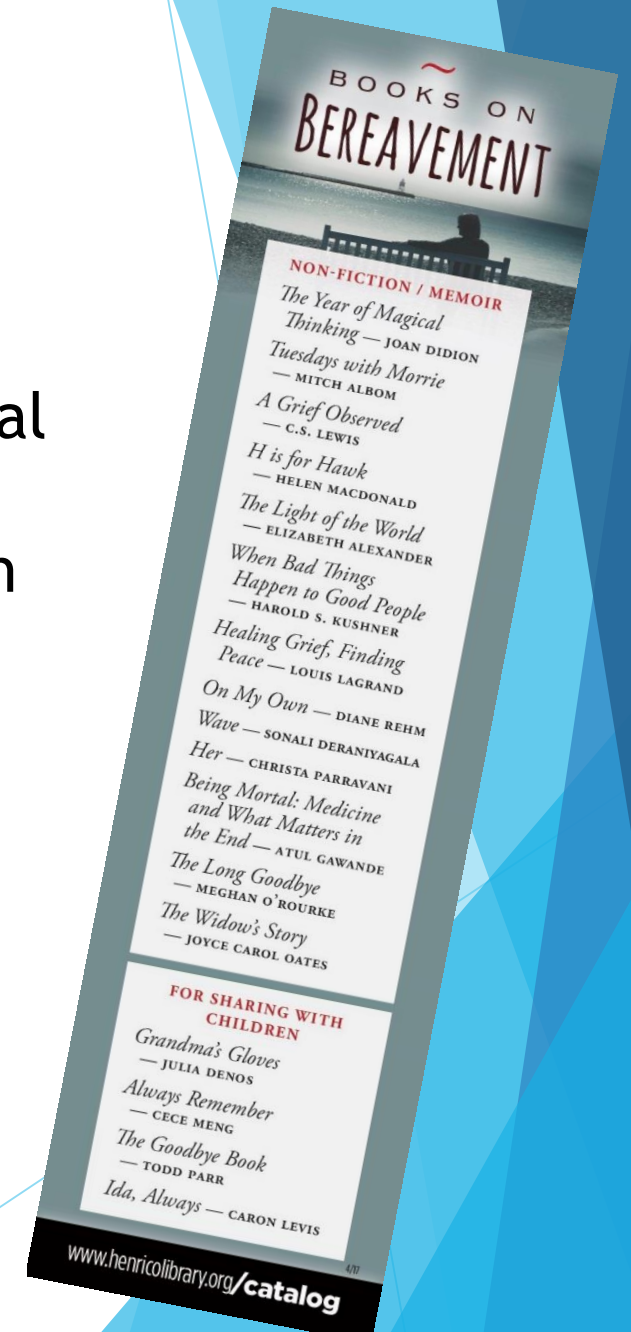
Collect bibliographies of books that deal with death grief and loss

Guest speakers such as a grief counselor, minister, psychologist or even the author.

Booklists



- Helping people through the emotional struggle of grief
- Opportunities for healing and growth
- Perspectives from others who have “been there”
- Reader sets their own pace for information input



The Grief Journey

No matter how many family members are going through the loss of a loved one at the same time, it is still a one lane road.

Books enable individuals to choose the appropriate tone and content for where they are in their journey.



Not Just for Your Patrons

Grief work is for everyone. Make sure your staff is prepared for the emotional experience that talking about grief causes.

Henrico held a Death Café with staff before offering it to the public.

Be aware of how your branch or system handle death and grief.

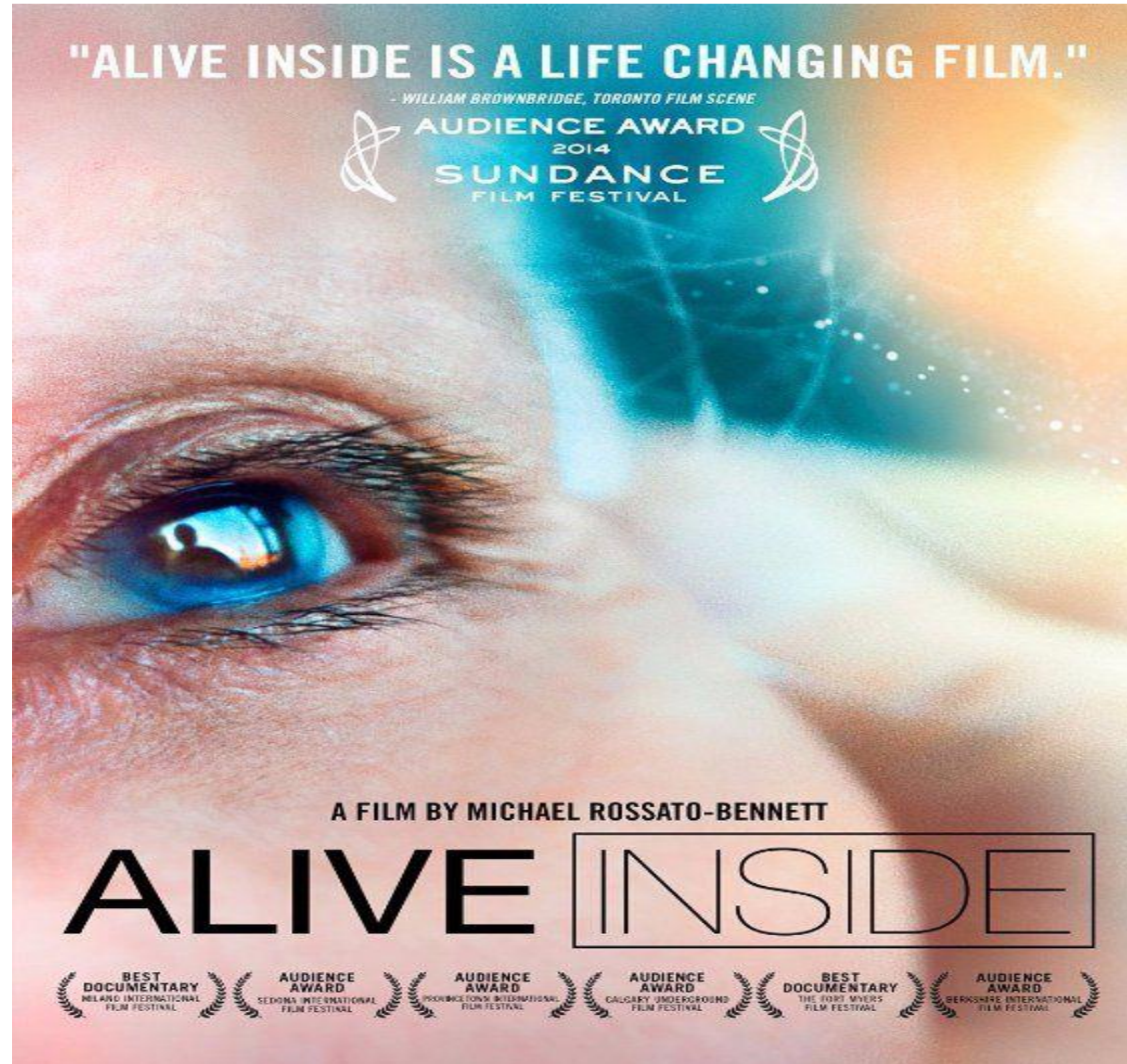


Music & Memory

“Music activities (both music listening and music making) can influence older adults’ perceptions about the quality of their lives. Some research has examined the effects of music listening on biological markers of health and subjective perceptions of wellbeing.” (Coffman, D. D. 2002. Music and quality of life in older adults. *Psychomusicology*, 18, 76-88).



Music & Memory



Henry Excerpt

Music & Memory



Extensive neuroscience research has shown that many people benefit profoundly from hearing their favorite songs that tap fond memories. Some outcomes that may be experienced:

- Someone who has been silent or less communicative may begin to talk and be more social.
- Someone who has been sad and depressed may feel happier.
- Someone who has been less mobile may become more physically active.

(musicandmemory.org)

Music & Memory



“The Program had a wonderful mix of music, trivia, and laughter to entertain everyone. The resident enjoyed listening to records and reminiscing about music from the early years. One resident had such a good time she got up and danced with Phil and Chris. The resident loved it!”

- Beth Wildermuth, Activities Director, Chestnut Grove

Questions & Comments

Resources:

Senior Advocate Online : www.senioradvocateonline.com

Senior Connections : www.seniorconnections-va.org

Music & Memory : www.musicandmemory.org

Death Café : www.deathcafe.com

National Association for Home Care and Hospice : www.nahc.org

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization: www.nhpc.org

National Caregivers Library : www.caregiverslibrary.org

November is National Hospice and
Palliative Care Month!

Session evaluation: tinyurl.com/fri2017vla

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