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**The Use of Music During Grief Resolution (Part 2)**

***by Tony Falzano***

***This is the second in a series of three articles on music and how it specifically acts as a healing agent for those grieving a loss. In the previous session, we examined how music can direct our attention from uneasy surroundings and divert us away from pain. This month we'll look at another way music can help us through the grief process.***

It's no secret that many therapists, clergy and medical professionals believe one of the best things we can do while grieving a loss is to have contact with loving, supportive people who will keep us active and provide company.

But in the times when we either want to, or need to be alone, there is something that can give us privacy and yet take the empty stillness out of a room. This element is music and it can be a sturdy companion as we travel the road with grief.

To understand more, let's first examine the meaning of the word companion. It's origin is Latin. The 1st syllable, "com" means "together" and "panion" comes from "panis" which means "bread." Several accounts refer to the word, "companion" as, "one who breaks bread." Now this would lead us to believe that the relationship between any 2 parties, "breaking bread", has a bond with each other. And that's the relationship we have with music. Throughout our lives, we've called upon songs, just like our friends, to keep us company because we liked how they made us feel. It should be no surprise that music is a faithful companion that we lean on.

When alone and listening to music, you're with a companion who is quietly keeping vigil with you. Music is similar to a friend who stops by to visit. It fills the room with sound and activity. While it plays you are not entirely alone. You can talk to it, cry with it and even shout at it. While it plays you can do what you want. And it will stay with you as long, as you wish. However, unlike with human contact, you don't have to worry about its feelings when you don't want to visit with it any longer. You can just shut it off with no explanations.

Furthermore, I think you would agree that any true companion or friend shows evidence of caring behavior. For example, they ***support*** you and make you feel ***safe.*** A friend is someone you've built a relationship of ***comfort, trust, and hope***. Believe it or not, music offers us these same qualities.

First, when we hear a song, we often connect to it. We follow the emotional mood and then align to its ‘message'. For example, we instinctively move our bodies when we hear up-tempo, rhythmic, beat oriented music. It puts us in a party mood and we want to dance. This energetic music makes us take action. We often exercise to it.  Hearing music play while we workout passes the time and makes the sessions more enjoyable. And the result of exercise is a stronger vascular system, lower blood pressure, less stress and a host of other health benefits. Exercise is important for everyone; including those under the weight of grief.

Now music that is slower, "beat-less" and has a minimal amount of rhythm and percussion helps us to relax. Medical studies show that less aggressive music slows down the brain waves reducing muscle tension and anxiety, regulating the heartbeat and pulse. So if the person listens to soft, soothing, slower music, it stands to reason the body will synthesize with it. The result will be a slower heart rate and a body that calms down to relax. You may find that certain music will relax you to the point where you fall asleep.

So whether you exercise or relax, music is a friendly companion who enhances the experience and ***supports*** you in your activities.

Continuing on, we all know that the bass provides the low sounding notes in the song. It gives the listener a sense of security and stability. Like you stand on the floor and feel secure, the low, constant bass provides the foundation within the music. When "lighter" sounding instruments play on top of a strong, steady bass, the listener feels grounded and ***safe.***

In addition, ***comfort***comes from hearing these "lighter" sounding instruments play a pleasing melody with a harmony that "clothes the melody". Even the word harmony means, "agreement" and by its definition offers companionship to the melody. That in turn is the foundation of a relationship you have with the music. The right notes arranged within an agreeable pattern will display a likeable melody that you become attracted to. Then ***trust*** begins when you get to know the piece and like how it makes you feel. And similar to a friend, you want to hear the song again and thus, be with it once more. Finally, the melody can take twists and turns throughout a musical composition, just like a conversation with someone. But when you part with a friend you usually leave on an up note; feeling satisfied. Many songs do the same by concluding on a brighter sounding plateau. Consequently, you leave your communication with the song on an optimistic note of ***hope.*** Together, these musical ingredients deliver to you, ***comfort, trust and hope.***

Now I'm not suggesting that music is all you need as you navigate through grief. Nor should it take the place of human interaction when you are upset, under stress, and unsure. What I am saying is that music can be an important ally as you integrate it in your total care and well being.

In the last article of this series, we'll examine several popular styles of music that are available to listen to as you move through the grief process. I'll also have a few suggestions on how to listen to music.

Many people believe music is the highest of all the art forms. It's hard to argue the point when we see all that it can do including offering us health benefits, distracting us from our troubles while extending companionship. Music is an ethereal gift to all of us, including the bereaved. We count on it to make us feel better. Along with family and friends, think of music as another partner to support you on your journey through grief. The songs you listen to are true, reliable friends. Call on them often. For they prove what The Beatles sang to us all those years ago; we do get by, "With a Little Help from our Friends".

***Tony Falzano***

*Tony Falzano is an author, college professor and an award winning songwriter who speaks on the enormous health benefits that music has to offer. His articles on the power in music to heal can be found in all the major grief magazines and websites.*  
  
*In addition, Tony has just released his new music CD,****"Just a Touch Away"****. Along with his first album,****"In Abba's Arms"****, his music has reached the ears and souls of many grieving a loss. Both CDs contain original instrumentals music designed to be an "inspirational companion" to calm, comfort and nurture those searching for healing and hope.*  
 ***"Just a Touch Away"****and****"In Abba's Arms"****are available through the New Leaf web store.*