

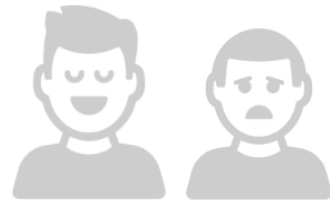


A quick guide to singing

Remember: There will come a time when we can think beyond infection control. However, at the moment the need to take responsibility for minimising risks associated with COVID-19 and the spread of the virus. Please follow your current local guidance at all times and adapt the advice and ideas below to fit with how you are able to work at the moment. If you would like further information relating to specific risks or guidance associated with making music, please [get in touch](#).

Getting Started with Singing

Some people love to sing! On their own, with others, or at work... Others feel uncomfortable singing to themselves, let alone in public! It is extremely common to worry about singing, but **remember: The people we work with rarely judge us for the beauty of our voices...** they value the connection our voices enable us to make with each other.



Building your confidence!



Our vocal cords are like muscles. They respond enthusiastically to frequent use and the vibrations produced will relax and massage our bodies. The following ideas may help you to feel more familiar and comfortable with your own unique, expressive singing voice:



Get to know your voice by **humming** a tune you know well. Humming can feel very calming and less terrifying than singing.



Try singing your **familiar song** with the words. If you have recordings of songs, you could sing along to these.



Try singing the tune of your familiar song using **“la la la”** sounds (instead of words). Being able to sing a song without worrying about the words can help you sing it at different speeds or adjust your singing to the mood of the person you are with.



Try singing your familiar song but **change the words** to a situation you might want to sing in at work, for example “Let’s stand up, we’re on the move...” or “Where are my shoes? Where are my feet?”



Why sing?

Whether you are singing with a group or singing with an individual, running a dedicated activity or music session or seizing a moment to sing with someone spontaneously, thinking about **why** you are singing can really help it be more meaningful and have the best impact. The following could be reasons why you might sing with someone. Which ones are relevant to the children or adults you work with?

- To build a sense of belonging and connection between people
- To encourage reminiscence or share stories
- To find out more about each other
- To contain difficult feelings
- To effect a change of mood
- To provide emotional support
- To build relationships
- To encourage purposeful use of the voice
- To promote language skills
- To promote active participation and listening
- To build self-confidence
- To provide opportunities for making choices
- To provide familiarity and orientation

Singing at work



Familiar songs are a great resource. These are songs which you and the people you work with already know. They provide a wide range of vocal, communication and auditory experiences and they can be used flexibly to help you connect with the other person.

A few things to think about when singing:



Song choice: Will the song be something you choose or will it be chosen by the person you are singing with? If it will be chosen by the person you are singing with, will it be free choice or will you ask them to choose from a selection of songs? If you are helping to choose songs, you may find it helpful to think about the individual you are singing with, as well as why you are singing with him or her. When and where the individual grew up can help us identify relevant childhood songs, TV themes, pop songs and songs from musicals.



How you position yourself: Will the person you are with respond better to you if you are near or at a distance? Do you want to be able to see each other? Is it helpful to be able to focus their attention or encourage their participation using gentle touch? Or will you be singing while you are doing something else?



How you use eye contact: Will you use eye contact to encourage participation or for the person you are working with to show you they are listening? Is eye contact stressful for the person you are singing with? If eye contact is a with each syllable you sing. At first, this will be very slow but, in time, you may find your group members become more focused and eye contact is made more quickly, thus speeding up your song.



How you use words¹:

- If you want to encourage the person to join in you could incorporate their name or sing a prompt: “Red and yellow and pink and green, Lily is singing today”)?
- If you want to promote language skills, try leaving pauses before key words, taking it slowly so the other person has enough time to join in: “Red and yellow and... [wait]...pink and...[wait]...” ?
- If you want the person to know you are watching what they are doing or raise their awareness of what they are doing you can change the words to reflect their actions: “Eric’s listening, his eyes are closed.” Or “We are washing are hands just now.” (both can be sung to the tune of the Rainbow song)
- If you want to encourage movement, you can choose a song with actions or adapt the words of another song to invite movement.



Remember: We all have a speed at which we are comfortable singing familiar songs. However, when you singing songs in your work it is not about the speed at which you are comfortable singing, but about the speed at which the person you are working with is comfortable.

Want to see some singing concepts in action?

As ever, we find there are many more resources for children available than any other age group. However, many of the ideas can be adapted for people of all ages just use your expertise to make the adjustments necessary to suit those with whom your work appropriately.



Music Therapist Susanna Bajali explores [songs with movement for children](#)

¹ I can sing a rainbow (Listen on [You Tube](#))



Music Therapist Emma Bailey demonstrates ways you can [incorporate songs into games](#) with young children.

Music Therapist Louise brown demonstrates how you can use a [song to help with routines](#).

The example here suits working with a young child, but you could use a similar approach using a tune more meaningful to an adult to achieve a similar aim. Your choice of tune will need to take into consideration the person's age and background but you might find inspiration in pop songs from the right era (try [Abba](#) or [The Beatles](#)), a traditional [folk song](#), or songs from [Musicals](#)).

Interactive Music-Maker, Margaret Corcoran, and Music Therapist, Kate Jones, demonstrate how they use [a variety of songs](#) to encourage active participation and interaction with the young children at Maytree Nursery.

Our Partners show us how [songs can connect people](#) through the ways they integrate music into the care of older people including those living with dementia.

If you find a broken hyperlink in these resources, please tell us: info@musicastherapy.org

Further Resources

Remember there are Activity Booklets online with more Singing Activities tailored to the needs of different client groups (click on the cover image to access).