

elaborates: “Often, patients at end-of-life and their caregivers need emotional support to help them manage anticipatory death and loss of loved ones. We hope that in addition to the medical/nursing/psychosocial services support and art therapy programmes, music therapy would also help us manage the patients’ and caregivers’ needs more holistically.”

Typically, every patient is assessed individually on their needs, which can range from the need to alleviate pain, anxiety, depression, and emotional difficulties. Using a preferred genre of music which may not necessarily have associations to race, personality or background, patients express what they are going through. This can culminate to song writing, music making in different mediums, including videos.

Music therapy still needs acceptance from patients and family members. Tammy explains: “People see it as a form of entertainment where the therapist performs and hence regarded as a musician. While it can be therapeutic listening to music, it is not therapy in itself. It is not about creating beautiful music, or whether the patient has musical talents or if the therapist is a good musician. What is important is the ability to solicit the patient’s participation, be it in singing, tapping or clapping to the beat.”

Though she can play the piano and the clarinet, what piqued Tammy’s interest in becoming a music therapist is the effects of depression that plagued someone close to her. She felt helpless seeing the emotional pain they are going through, yet at the same time is aware of the difficulties these people have relationships and connection with others.

She then set her mind on learning how to help people and enrolled in a psychology programme at University of North Texas (USA). When the calling to help more people came and wanting to leverage on the extensive music training she had, she went on to pursue a master’s programme in Music at Texas Women’s University (USA).

Tammy looks forward to contributing to the field. “Music plays a unique role in people’s life. It brings potential for wholeness in each individual. I hope I can continue to serve people by bringing them joy and peace through music.” 🎵

Tips for Caregivers

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There is no single definition for caregiving, but for the purpose of this article, a caregiver is any relative or friend, who provides a wide range of unpaid care to a person with a chronic or serious illness.



We often do not give caregivers enough attention that they deserve. Many caregivers are put into the role without any warning or choice, and are left feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Here are some tips for caregivers who are experiencing this.

Tip #1: Allow yourself to grieve.

When you’ve been thrown into a new role as a ‘Caregiver’, it is NORMAL to feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, frightened, or even numb. It is important for you to be aware of your own emotions and to acknowledge them. Allow yourself to grieve. It means you are brave enough to face your own emotions. You need to understand what you are going through before you can help others.

Tip #2: Deal with uncertainty.

Amidst the turmoil and uncertainty, you have to find some way to adapt. One thing you can do is to ask questions, preferably of someone who is reliable and knowledgeable, about your loved one’s condition. This takes courage because the answers may not always be what you wish to hear.

The most constructive way of replying to unfavourable news is to deal with it squarely — which means to accept it. Acceptance does not equate to admitting defeat; it means that we have the capacity to make the best decisions for that matter at that moment. Learning to live with uncertainty means that you don’t run away or avoid the difficult problems. It means you take things in your stride, and use your abilities and available resources to support your loved one. Even just your presence is a tremendous support to your loved one.