

Recreation Therapy Interventions for Pain and Mood Distress



Root causes of distress are often unclear. Consider involving recreation therapy early, as part of the interdisciplinary team, to assess and manage distress. Therapeutic recreation can safely improve pain and mood, as part of a bundle of interventions.

Psychosocial interventions, such as recreation therapy, can be effective first-line interventions for depressive symptoms, according to the [2021 Canadian Guidelines on Prevention, Assessment and Treatment of Depression Among Older Adults](#).

- [Interventions for Depressive Symptoms](#) include socializing, singing, pet therapy, horticulture, music, sensory stimulation, aromatherapy, exercise, and reminiscing.

Non-drug therapies should always be part of the pain management plan, according to [GeriatricPain.org: Core Principles of Pain Treatment](#).

- [Non-drug Pain Interventions](#) include exercise, music, relaxation, and distraction.

To maximize therapeutic value, reduce background sounds, ensure eyeglasses and hearing aides are worn, and support overall comfort. Consider opportunities to involve designated support persons, volunteers, staff, and privately hired service providers.

[Dementia communication strategies](#) can support successful interactions with persons who have cognitive impairment.

Looking for more resources? Check out:

- [Pocket card](#): Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health
- [Changing Behaviours – Pat’s Story](#) demonstrates how music and behaviour mapping significantly improved the quality of life of a resident named Gracie.