

Playing Favorite Holiday Songs

Music



Set up

- Set aside 30 minutes
- Find a pleasant, quiet location indoors where you and your partner can hear easily, and can freely move and sing together
- Gather materials:
 - Two chairs
 - A table (any size)
 - Water or favorite holiday beverage (additional refreshments optional)
 - CD player, iPod, or device with speakers or a traditional record player
 - Three favorite winter holiday songs – in recorded or website linked video.
 - A selection including one favorite of yours and two of your care partners for the holiday of your choice (Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanza, Solstice, New Year etc.)
 - Family photographs and/or decorations from winter holidays
 - Small memobook or blank index cards and a pencil
 - Optional additions to set the scene:
 - Songbooks, sheet music or songsheets
 - Musical instrument(s) which either/both of you play or have in the past
 - Fresh baked holiday treats or drinks associated with family traditions

Consciously Breathe

- Look your partner in the eyes and say, “Let’s breathe together”
- Take three deep inhales and exhales together

Sing and Move

- Sing a holiday song together (choose one):
 - “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”
 - “I Have a Little Dreidel”
 - “Feliz Navidad”
 - Another favorite
- Begin to make up movements to go with the song
- Invite your partner to mirror your gestures
- Repeat the song without the lyrics (use la-la-la) and enlarge the gestures

Call and Response

- Say the words below and have your partner repeat after each line
- Start by saying, “Repeat after me.”

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.
my little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.
He gives his harness bells a shake
to ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

Create Together

- Reprise breathing together with your partner (as above). Then:
 - Rub your own hands together, warming them as if over a fire.
 - Cross the mid-line of your body, hand over hand, and warm your hands again.
 - Gently place your warmed hands on your face covering your eyes and then lift them suddenly – looking at one another and smile. Repeat.

- Alternately, vary this by warming your hands and then holding each others hands, noticing the warmth.
- Next, say “It’s [name of holiday] time – let’s warm up with some music!”
- Ask: “Do you have a favorite holiday [holiday of your choice] song?” If this song is one you’ve gathered play it. If not, make a note of it for next time.
- Play the song and savor it together: If recording or video, listen together. Feel free to move and/or sing along. Notice how your partner responds to particular words, images or phrases in the music. Jot this down for your ‘tried & true’ list of your partner’s musical preferences.
- Alternately, if you can, play the song on instruments you’ve gathered or sing unaccompanied.
- Repeat the above for a 2nd song, now asking: “What holiday songs did you sing as a child?” “Tell me about that.”
- Invite your partner to look at the items on the table and choose whichever catches their eye.
- Use the item they choose as a prompt for a 3rd song choice:
 - If they choose a song, ask: “Should we give a listen to that one?” Go for it.
 - If they choose a photo, ask “What’s going on in this picture?”; “What did you used to do, sing, eat.... at (name of holiday) time?”
 - Ask about holiday customs i.e. lighting the menorah, family gatherings, opening presents, the most beautiful Christmas tree you ever saw, etc).
 - Then ask: “What music might go well with that?” Be open for both familiarity and surprise. (Remember every answer is the right answer!)
- Alternately, if your partner is a parent or grandparent ask: “Did you sing with your children? With your grandchildren?”

Celebrate Each Other

- Positively acknowledge a moment of accomplishment
- Examples: “That was great!”; “I’ve never heard you sing like that!”; “You brought back so many fond memories!; “I loved laughing and singing together.”
- Reflect for a moment on each of the songs shared – recalling its title and anything you noticed about the experience of listening and/or singing and moving together. Ask your partner to share what was most enjoyable and meaningful for them.
- Savor the moment