

What are the ethical considerations
for a facilitator using trauma-informed
community music practice in
complex community settings?

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“Some of the most neglected and misunderstood individuals in our society are the women in the criminal justice system.”

-Covington, 2016

- “49% of women prisoners [...] were assessed as suffering from anxiety and depression. (Only 19% of the general female UK population were estimated to be suffering from different types of anxiety and depression.)
- 46% of women in prison have been identified as having suffered a history of domestic abuse;
- 53% of women in prison reported having experienced emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse (compared to 27% of men)” (Berman, 2013).



York St. John Prison Partnership Project

“The intention is for both communities to be part of a transformative & educational learning experience that emphasises creative collaboration and addresses issues of social concern”

-Conlon, 2013

The Five Values of Trauma-Informed Practice

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment



Safety

Engaging in “working with” not “working on” people (Higgins, 2012: p. 156) and enabling social transformation necessitates community musicians to find ways to empower and provide a safe space for participants.

Collaboration

“If community musicians can think beyond comfortable understandings of what usually constitutes community, then they may be more successful in providing increased and richer opportunities for the ‘voices’ of participants to be heard.”

-Higgins, 2012

Empowerment

“Concurrently there is a further realization, as identified by Martha Nussbaum (2000) that care-related factors such as love, empathy, collaboration, reflexivity, power, empowerment, and voice, are central human capabilities that practices of and for social justice need to promote.”

-Burnard, 2018

Trust

“As an expectation of hospitality, trust and respect are significant ideas. In synergy with an ethics of care [...] I observed community music facilitators consciously cultivating environments of trust and respect through an overarching desire to ‘hear’ the others’ ‘voices’.”

-Higgins, 2012

Choice

How do we enable creative exchange in a situation where the social barriers are immense and the participants are, at this point in time, no longer free citizens?



Trauma-Informed Practice:
takes the trauma into account
avoids triggering trauma reactions
adjusts the behaviour of practitioners to support the
women's coping capacity
enables survivors to manage their trauma symptoms
successfully

“Essential to this process is to find voice through singing. Our teaching seeks to unlock these latent capacities, and indeed this is the essential aspect of providing opportunities for self-discovery.”

-De Quadros, 2016

Preliminary Findings and Emerging Themes

Initial reflections from the women, reveal that the singing sessions enable:

- **Improved emotional wellbeing** - the sessions are therapeutic; are beneficial to the women's mental and emotional wellbeing; improve the women's self-esteem and confidence; enable the women to feel like they belong
- **Personal and creative skills development** - the sessions have given the women confidence in singing (where they might have been afraid to join a group, they're now recognising that they would do so on release); have encouraged the women's individual abilities and love of singing; have given the women opportunities to be creative
- **A sense of normality** - the sessions have given the women the space to be themselves and on an equal footing with each other and the facilitators; have given the women a sense of normality in their week; have offered a non-judgemental space where the women's previous experiences or crime aren't relevant to the creative process or equality in the space

“Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
We all have sorrow
But if we are wise
We know that there's always tomorrow

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on”

-Bill Withers, 1972

“Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill those of your needs
That you won't let show

You just call on me sister, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'll understand
We all need somebody to lean on”

-Bill Withers, 1972

“Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on”

-Bill Withers, 1972

“You just call on me sister, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'll understand
We all need somebody to lean on

If there is a load you have to bear
That you can't carry
I'm right up the road
I'll share your load
If you just call me (call me x4)”

-Bill Withers, 1972

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