Sounding out Compassion

Youth Music Project Kit

DRAFT

MAY 2019
BACKGROUND

- This project provides you with an opportunity to express through music what the motivation of compassion sounds like;
- Compassion is one of earliest motivations that have allowed humans to survive.
- Compassion motivation can support more positive actions because it organises our emotions in more supportive and calming ways;
- The definition of compassion is the ability to see suffering and to take resourced action to reduce that suffering;
- This project has been developed by Compassionate Ballarat in conjunction with youth facilitators at the City of Ballarat;
- Compassionate Ballarat is part of the Australian and global Charter for Compassion networks (Appendix 1).

CONTEXT

- The original inspiration for this music project is the Compassion Symphony;
- The Compassion Symphony was written and performed by the musician Lior, and composer Nigel Westlake around the time that Nigel’s Westlake’s son had been killed in a car accident – Westlake was unable to write music until his son’s friends took him to a Lior concert - and Lior’s voice and presence inspired him to write again - and the Compassion Symphony was the result of that collaboration;
- The symphony premiered with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House in late 2013;
- Of course, there are many songs that have been inspired by suffering and compassionate responses - ‘Oh Canada’ by Missy Higgins is another illustration of that. More examples at Appendix 2
- This youth music project will contribute to the launch of Ballarat becoming a compassionate city later in 2019;

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project:
- Invites you and others aged between 12 and 22 to create new interpretations of compassion through music;
- Provides resources to them so that you can better understand the science and practice of compassion;
- Creates contemporary and poetic musical imagery of compassion for today’s world;
- Tells compassion stories through musical expression to regional, national and global audiences;
WHAT’S IN IT FOR YOU?

- **Be part of a musical collaboration** - the participants would be invited to identify a compassion issue and response – and can choose to do that individually or in collaboration with others - for example could be a duo, or a small band, or a school might ask a humanities class to identify an issue of concern and the music students would then take that as the basis for their adaptation or composition;

- **Have a creative experience** - identifying and interpreting through music and uploading that story onto a video platform – to be shared across Ballarat, Australia and the world via the Charter’s webpages and digital platforms;

- **Have your voice heard** - this project will provide you with the opportunity to identify issues of concern to you and your friends - that governments should be taking an interest in. The issues identified as in need of a compassionate approach will be collated and sent to relevant local, State and Commonwealth ministers;

- **Become a role model for others** - as this project will be rolled out across Australia and be promoted through the global Charter for Compassion network;

THE EVIDENCE BASE OF COMPASSION

- A new science defines compassion as: the courage to descend into the reality of the human experience;

- At a time when social media can create increased levels of anxiety; and when we know that half of all mental health conditions in adulthood emerge by age 14 – the courage and motivation of compassion is key to human thriving, particularly among young people;

- There is considerable evidence now that when people are caring to others and feel cared for by others - their body and mind works more optimally, than if people are uncaring to others and feel uncared for themselves;

- This new evidence base of compassion is based in neuroscience, psychology, models of emotional intelligence and emotional regulation; evolutionary biology, and management theory;

The Evidence Base of Music

Studies continue to confirm a positive influence of music on the human nervous system – calming it down and stimulating human creativity.
Being involved with music has been shown to:

- **Strengthen social bonds with others** - whether writing music with others, or singing with others, or recording individually with a recording studio - all require coordination, and cooperation with one another;
- **Reduces stress and depression** - a study of cancer patients found that listening to and playing music reduced anxiety. Another study revealed that music therapy lowered levels of depression and anxiety;
- **Strengthen memory and reading skills** - because music and reading are related via common neural and cognitive mechanisms;
- **Make you happy** - McMaster University discovered that babies who took interactive music classes displayed better early communication skills. They also smiled more;
- **Allow you to process multiple things at once** - this is because playing music forces you to process multiple senses at once, which can lead to superior multisensory skills;
- **Increase blood flow in your brain** - studies have found that short bursts of musical training increase the blood flow to the left hemisphere of the brain. That can be helpful when you need a burst of energy. Skip the energy drink and jam for 30 minutes;
- **Strengthen the brain's executive's function** - executive function covers critical tasks like processing and retaining information, controlling behavior, making decisions, and problem solving. If strengthened, you can boost your ability to live well.
The Process

**THE STEPS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT ARE TO:**

| **1** | Choose an issue that has a medium level of concern - it can involve you or your friends, or a social or environmental situation; |
| **2** | Read the information in this kit and in Appendix 3 on the three regulations systems so that you have a better idea of what compassion is and how you can be supported in your music expression. |
| **3** | Next do an exercise that will bring you into your calm self - you can either take a few moments to do the breathing exercise in Appendix 5, or do something you know brings you into a calm space - listen to music, or walk in nature, or... |
| **4** | Think of what a compassionate response to that issue would look like - it wouldn’t be wanting to punish or getting back at others. |
| **5** | Adapt or compose a piece of music of up to 4mins that expresses the matters raised by your issue and that compassionate response. |
| **6** | Once you have completed the music, then create a video on your phone or other device in which you introduce yourself, your issue of concern, your compassionate response, and then play your adaptation or composition. |
| **7** | Upload your completed video onto a website - set out along the lines of Triple J Unplugged - at www.federation.edu.au/compassion - by 6 September 2019 |
| **8** | Consider telling your story and playing your music to celebrate the project outcomes as part of the launch of Compassionate Ballarat |

**PLEASE NOTE:** If at any time being involved in this project causes any upset to you please call these services  
Headspace 5304 4777  
Lifeline - 13 11 14

**Any Questions?**  
Contact - Dr Lynne Reeder ph) 5327 6943
APPENDIX 1

Global Charter for Compassion

- The Charter for Compassion is both a document and a movement and provides an umbrella for people to engage in collaborative partnerships worldwide. Its mission is to bring to life the principles articulated in the Charter for Compassion through concrete, practical action in a myriad of sectors. It adopts the ‘Golden Rule in its approach to compassion i.e. treat others as you would like them to treat you’. In 2018 almost ten years after Karen Armstrong was awarded the TED Prize, the Charter for Compassion has grown into a truly global movement. The Charter engages people in all walks of life and on every continent – its main program is its compassionate cities program and there are now over 430 compassionate cities around the world.

Charter for Compassion Australia

- Vision - we want to live in an Australia where the healing power of compassion is applied to alleviate the suffering around us; where we are resourced through the new evidence base of compassion. We want to create a Continent for compassion in the recognition that nurturing environments are conducive to human wellbeing and to the experience of a meaningful human life. Indeed developing the social, emotional and physical environments that nurture mental, and physical wellbeing is the role of all those interested in creating the communities of the future.

More at - www.charterforcompassion.com.au

- The main activities of the Charter in Australia include:
  - Compassionate Cities
  - Australian Compassion Action Network: Communities of Compassionate Practice;
  - National Day of Compassion

APPENDIX 2

- These are some examples of music inspired by compassion:

COMPASSION SYMPHONY

Story - Nigel Westlake’s song cycle Compassion comes after the tragic loss of his son, Eli, in a car accident in 2008. The result is a sensitive collection of 7 songs themed around the concept of compassion and related humanitarian qualities. The songs combine eastern elements of harmony, dissonance,
microtones and complex rhythms with a symphonic aesthetic beautifully coloured by the orchestra with profound effect.

Watch it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Nsto-pykaE

Oh Canada

Story “Oh Canada” is a song by Australian singer-songwriter Missy Higgins, and inspired by Alan Kurdi—a drowned Syrian boy whose body washed up on a Turkish beach in September 2015. The track was released on 19 February 2016 with 100% of net profits from the song to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

Watch it here - https://youtu.be/TsFaI0YlWU0

Others?

APPENDIX 3

In order to do compassion well - we need to be resourced and skilled. Prof Paul Gilbert notes that - the ability to be calm and peaceful is crucial to human wellbeing. An important task for us all is to be more aware and understanding of the three emotion regulation systems that guide us, and how these regulate our behaviour and emotions.

Information on our three emotion regulation systems

1. Threat and Survival system
   • **Purpose** - to protect us & to get us to automatically reacting
   • **Body** – Gut churning, tight neck, shallow breathing, high heart rate
   • **Positive actions** – Flight - safety seeking, move away from harm
   • **Negative actions** – Fight - strike back, revenge, automatic tribal reactions Freeze - withdraw

2. Drive and Achievement system
   • **Purpose** - Engenders competition, achievement, drive, rational mind, consuming - goal orientated
   • **Body** – Isn’t this exciting’, ‘isn’t this yummy’, ‘wouldn’t that be good’, or ‘I better...,’ I want more ..’ I can’t stop...’ I need to be better at’
   • **Positive actions** - Working, achieving, pursuing, resource-focused
   • **Negative actions** - Over working, addictions, ‘whatever it takes’
3. Calming and Connecting system

- **Purpose** - to keep us content, less stressed, making decisions from a calm and considered place
- **Body** - calm breathing, feeling grounded, lighter, at peace
- **Actions** - kindness to yourself and others – in the present moment, choosing where you put your attention.

When developing a compassionate response to the issue of concern you identify – please note that a compassionate response would have these types of attributes:

- You would feel connected to yourself and others – it’s not an isolating response;
- You would feel content and courageous in your response – not angry and fearful;
- You would feel at peace and in harmony with yourself and others – not disconnected and detached;
- Your purpose would be to relieve suffering – not to pity, or patronise;
- Your response would be reflective and creative - not unthinking, reactive, or punitive.

**APPENDIX 4 DEFINITIONS OF COMPASSION**

**WHAT IS COMPASSION?**

As a motivation, compassion has two elements to it

1) stimulus detection - which is how we notice and turn towards or engage with the signals of suffering and distress;
2) action and response - as with any motivation, there are the triggers to that motivation and then take the necessary actions;

Therefore, compassion is defined as a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to alleviate and prevent it; and importantly committing oneself to be attentive to the suffering of self and others is actually a courageous action. Indeed courage is a key part of compassion;

**Other compassion definitions**

- ‘Always treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself’ (Karen Armstrong)
- ‘Seeing and addressing suffering directly’ (Jane Dutton)
• ‘A state of concern for the suffering or unmet need of another, coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering.’ (Goetz)

• ‘All human beings are born with the capacity for compassion, and that it must be cultivated for human beings to survive and thrive’ (Charter website)

• ‘Compassion is a holistic understanding of a problem or the suffering of another with a commitment to solve that problem’ (Christopher Kukk)

• The key to compassion is tuning in to the nature of suffering, to understand it in the depths of our being, and to see clearly into its source, but equally important is to be committed to relieve it and to rejoice in the possibility of the alleviating the suffering for all. (Paul Gilbert)

• Compassion is not to pity, but to suffer with – I am like you – we both suffer – we both desire the relief of suffering – I want to help in alleviating your suffering. (Robertson Work)

‘Our evolutionary success is linked to an ever-widening circle of compassion – it is our almost ever-present instinct.’ (Charles Darwin)

**APPENDIX 5 - SOOTHING RHYTHM BREATHING**

In order to build your compassionate mind - to be able to assess a compassionate response to your issue of concern - you will need to engage in some activities such as soothing rhythm breathing, grounding, attention training, and mindfulness.

Keep in mind that it is your behaviour and intentions to become calmer, wiser, and sensitive that is important in being able to feel compassion towards all those involved in the issue you are working on.

Do 4 rounds of breathing x 4

• Present
• Still
• Grounded
• Inspired
Or this Soothing Rhythm Breathing exercise will support the physiological changes required in your body to calm yourself and connect empathically to your issue.

Allow yourself to settle into a comfortable position, arms relaxed on your legs - body upright in the chair - eyes either closed or slightly open with a soft gaze.

Sitting comfortably, place both feet flat on the floor and rest your hands on your legs. Close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you prefer.

Allow yourself to have a gentle facial expression with a slight smile.

Now gently focus on your breathing. As you breathe try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm - Feel the area underneath your ribs, move as you breathe in and out.

Just notice your breathing - you might like to breathe a little faster or a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. It is like you are checking in, linking up with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.

What you will usually find is that your breathing is slightly slower and deeper than normal. The in-breathe is about 3 seconds... hold ... then take 3 seconds for the out-breath. Ensure that the breaths in and out are smooth and even. So, for example, notice if you are breathing in a bit too quickly or collapsing the out breath.

You can spend a little while - for as long as you wish - just focusing on your breathing, just noticing the breath coming down into the diaphragm, your diaphragm lifting and then the air moving out, through your nose.

Sometimes it’s useful to focus on the point just inside the nose where the air enters. So, in through your mouth and out from your nose, in through your mouth and out through your nose... just focus on that for a while... just ‘ground yourself for a moment’.

Now turn your attention to your body - sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you. Allowing yourself to feel held and supported......coming to rest...in the present moment....Remember that it is perfectly ok for your mind to wander.
Simply notice it happening with curiosity about where your mind has gone and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body as best as you can.

Sense the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils...just gently observing.....no need to change anything.....just allowing things to be as they are.

If you find focusing on your breathing a bit difficult (and some people do) then allow your attention to rest on an object. Find something you might like to hold such as a smooth stone or a soft ball -something that gives you the feeling of gentleness and calmness.

So as you just focus on your breathing also focus on your object that you’re holding - noticing how it feels in your hand resting your gaze on your object as best as you can.... staying with the sensations of holding it in your hand.

When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. Sometimes it helps if you just have a gentle stretch and a deep breath to prepare you to carry on with your day.

If you would like a recording of this Soothing Rhythm Breathing read to you by Prof Paul Gilbert click here: http://www.mindfulcompassion.com/what-we-do-1-1
# PROJECT PLAN

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<td></td>
<td>Submit ethics approval for the project</td>
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<td>Create a comprehensive database to reach 12-22 year olds across Ballarat;</td>
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<td>Design and delivery of invitations to young people wanting to be involved in this project - including solo acts and small ensembles of any instruments; formal bands or orchestras; vocal groups;</td>
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<td>Involve the Arts academy with Rick Chew and student volunteers for mentoring opportunities and links to the Creative Cities initiative;</td>
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<td>Finalise and distribute the Concept kit to invite young Victorians to identify an issue in their community in need of compassion and reflect on what a compassionate response might be to that issue; Then drawing on that reflection - compose or adapt a piece of music between 2 and 5 mins to envisage that story;</td>
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<td>Seek funding opportunities for a video encapsulation of the Sounding Out Compassion – develop a proposal – send to Mercedes, CHW others?</td>
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<td>Set up the webpage to capture and display the videos</td>
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<td>Play it forward – Ballarat homeless choir in doco</td>
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<td>Identify well-known Victorians in compassion science and music to comment on the compassion stories and compositions in the project;</td>
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<td>Plan all day concert of participants and finish with Lior and Rick Chew</td>
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• The stories and music will be open to all – there will be no barriers to participation in this project;
• Development of an Concept Kit to:
  o provide and inform participants of the new science of compassion – with the resources to develop their compassionate selves;
Begin by settling into a posture that is comfortable – but where you are still alert

Make sure your feet are grounded and you feel supported – feel your back and legs against the chair. Take a deep breath in and exhale out – take another breath in – hold it – and then feel your body relax as you breathe out

See if you can hold a soft and gentle facial expression as you do this exercise – you may want to smile a little –

As your mind settles, imagine a colour or colours that you associate with compassion – or that conveys a sense of soothing and kindness –

The colours might appear as a light – a haze – a mist or even swirling colours - It might only be a fleeting sense of colour – but see if you can imagine this colour surrounding you - Then imagine the colour or mist entering through your heart area and then slowly moving throughout your body –

Now we want to think of this colour as imbued with the qualities of wisdom, strength, warmth, and kindness - Now as you imagine the colour flowing through you – see that it solely focused on helping you strengthening you and supporting you

Imagine that it flows around your body and sooths and softens any areas of difficulty, pain or tension you might be experiencing - If blocks or barriers arise – especially those linked to feelings of not deserving this support and kindness

Just recognise there as distractions and intrusions and mindfully go back to focusing of you compassionate colour

Remember that in this exercise we are seeking to stimulate certain areas of the brain – ones that develop your own very important soothing system.

Don’t worry then if your distractions or intrusions seem consuming at times

Just smile to yourself and go back to the soothing breathing rhythm - Stay with the sense of the colour flowing through you – the colour that is focused on helping strengthening and supporting you - Now for the next few minutes we’ll stay focusing gently on our breath and colour -
On the next in breath let the image of the colour fade and wiggle your toes and fingers and come back into the room

As you go about the rest of this day, try to maintain a ‘felt sense’ of the compassionate colour and its qualities holding and supporting you.

If you would like a recording of this Soothing Rhythm Breathing read to you by Prof Paul Gilbert click here: http://www.mindfulcompassion.com/what-we-do-1-1

Other resources
BBC Radio 4 - The Symphony Within

**Japan constructed the world’s most magnificent sound garden**

Have you ever been on a hike and just stopped to appreciate the sounds of nature? The sound of the wind, rain dripping through leaves, and birds chirping all combine to make an amazing wild orchestra. In 2012, Morihiro Harano and his team worked with carpenter Mitsuo Tsuda, and sound engineer Kenjiro Matsuo, to create a giant xylophone elevated throughout the forest.

They made the xylophone in one long straight line and then place a small rubber ball at the top. They let it freely fall down, slowly plunking throughout the natural scenery. As the xylophone bels out the notes, you might notice the tune being played. Bach’s famous Cantata 147, with tempos and instrumental subtleties included.

The wooden symphony pierce through the natural silence of the forest. There wasn’t much room for mistakes on this project. One incorrectly placed note could distort the entire performance. Surprisingly enough, the same day the video was filmed a monster earthquake struck Japan. Afterwards, the xylophone’s melody brought about a calming experience for the entire nation.

Nowadays, the forest xylophone has found another home at the Daisetsu Mori-no Garden, Japan’s famous Hokkaido Garden Show. If you visit the forest you can buy your own rubber ball from a vending machine and send it down the xylophone. Due to the fact the boards can rot, they have to close on rainy days.
Enjoy watching Morihiro Harano’s rubber ball perform Bach’s Cantata 147 below!

https://educateinspirechange.org/inspirational/music/japan-constructed-the-worlds-most-magnificent-sound-garden/

This morning I have received an email from Marilyn Turkovich - global director of the Charter for Compassion.

It was to link me to Christi Worsley from the Consolari Music and Education Center in the US. Christi and her husband Bob are working with New York City’s Lincoln Center, the Mesa Arts Center, Mesa Public Schools and other entities, to transform a 10-acre auto dealership into one of the premier performing-arts destinations. The Consolari project is informed by the belief that music has the power to uplift, heal and inspire as well as build bridges across diverse communities, and compassion is a central component of their work following the death of their baby 8mths into Christi’s pregnancy - (more info attached)

Apparently Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Row Foundation is engaged already in this project. Christi is essentially looking for funding – but also for the strategic partnerships to support that fund raising.
Marilyn mentioned that her dream is to have the Compassion Symphony played in every Compassionate City around the world. I haven’t yet mentioned our discussions around also including Stari Most into our Compassion in Music project.

What I would like to do in progressing our work is to for us all to agree on next steps.

Have you come across the Ford Foundation’s Just Films grant? Can have a read through on the www.fordfoundation.org site and we can discuss when we catch up next Friday. I’m sure you are very much across this group but just in case.

http://www.csi.edu.au/

My good friend Andrew Garton who I told you about as a possible collaborator on your project is working with them regarding this film project.

https://forgedfromfire.agarton.org/

was just speaking the with the IT guy in the School of Health and Life Sciences and he has said that he would be happy to create a web page and a drop box for collection of the project videos.

It would be similar to that of Triple J Unearthed - https://www.triplejunearted.com/discover/tracks

As I work on the Kit for this project – I am adding in links for mental health support – in case the participants are emotional triggered by the issues they raise. I’m also thinking if you want to do a research project as part of the doco – then we’ll need to have ethics approval. Have you done anything on that to date? If not, then I’d be happy to work with you to put a proposal through the FedUni ethics process. The next full meeting is on 5 October or there is a subgroup meeting on 14 September – which would be worthwhile trying to make. I think we’d need to have some level of approval for this project given that it will require the students to face potentially some emotional issues.

Part of the work of Compassionate Ballarat

Video of the process to share across the global charter

Ethics approval

Kit
Advertising

Proposal to Mercedes - for funding of $35,000 for a professional doco and Lior and Rick to be paid

Play it forward - Ballarat homeless choir in doco