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# Introducing Community Music as a Recovery Oriented Practice in Mental Health Setting: Our Preliminary Experiences

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# What is Community Music (社區音樂)

- Community music can be viewed as an active intervention between a music facilitator and participants in a community (Higgins 2012):
  - Active music making outside of formal teaching and learning situations
  - Emphasis on people, participation, context, equal of opportunity and diversity.
- Community Music: to make music with people from the community, to tell their stories through music
- A practice popular in UK among their communities

# My Involvement with CM

- 2009- involved with CCCD (Community Centre for Cultural Development), received training from Mr. Pete Moser (UK)
- 2009-2010: Started hosting community music sessions with new immigrants, children, clients from HWH etc.
- 2011: formed a community music group for women at Tin Shui Wai 靜心之聲 (till now)
- 2012: formed a community music group for female service users at Placidity Place (ICCMW), The Placidity Sound (朗澄之聲).

# The Placidity Sound (朗澄之聲)



# Placidity Sound 朗澄之聲

- Placidity Sound consists of a group of 14 service users and community volunteer from Placidity Place 朗澄坊. The service users suffered from a range of mental distresses including depression and schizophrenia.
- In early 2012, a community music group ( Five 2.5 hours weekly sessions) were hosted. The initial goal of the group was about giving the opportunities for the group participants to tell their stories through sharing and song writing. After completing the five sessions, all participants requested to continue to have regular community music meeting on a monthly basis.

# Content of a CM session

In the typical session, the following will take place:

- Connection through briefing sharing (verbal/voice/music instrument)
- Sing songs/ playing music instruments



# Content of a CM session (contd)

- Writing songs- there are various ways of writing songs in community music practice:
  - In a big group, participants are invited to sing a line of melody, then based on the melody they think of the lyrics that fit the melody, then think of next line of melody/lyrics. A simple song is created in this process
  - Select a theme ( e.g. about family), group participants broke into pairs and wrote four line of words, then invited them to sing those words out. Gathered group again, each pairs performed their “songs”. Then try to link up the tiny “songs” into one longer song.
  - The originally composed song will be revised and accompanied by community music facilitator

# Content of a CM session (contd)

- Performing and recording the newly written song:
  - Before the end of the session, the newly composed song will be performed by the participants as a group, and the performance will be recorded (through smartphone). The audio recordings will be shared among the participants using whatsapp tool.

# Public Performances

- From 2012-2014, the group has performed and shared their songs in different public events:
  - Members meeting of ICCMW
  - As an opening items in talks conducted for service users/general public
  - Hosted a concert for service users at ICCMW
  - During visits to long stay care homes
  - Opening ceremony of ICCMW
  - Closing ceremony of Creative Art Therapy Symposium

# Studio recording

- In early 2014, the group has recorded their songs at a professional music studio and their first CD was released. A website for the CD was also launched.



## 2014年最新作品



### 元朗天水圍淑女原創心聲全紀錄

唱片中所有的歌詞都是由朗澄之聲婦女所創作，一字一句都道盡她們的心聲，以及對她們所居住社區的感受。

#### ▼ DISC

- 1. 來  [試聽](#)
- 2. 趕走林黛玉  [試聽](#)
- 3. 開心自在歌  [試聽](#)
- 4. B仔涼粉歌  [試聽](#)
- 5. 開心快樂歌  [試聽](#)
- 6. 活在當下  [試聽](#)
- 7. 女人唔簡單  [試聽](#)
- 8. 五心精續 

# The songs

- The songs written by the group have a variety of themes, yet they share the similarities of being positive and encouraging.



# 開心自在歌

Happy and care free song

開心自在相見歡笑 大家相關愛

Happy and care free, we love one another

遇到艱苦都要堅信 人生充滿希望

Need to be hopeful even in adversities

風雨不畏懼 互助互勉相寬恕 共聚盼永固情誼

We are not afraid, we support one another with forgiving heart, friendship forever

開展活力添上衝勁 用歌相呼應

We sing to energize one another

樂於分享聽您傾訴 其中所有心事

We are glad to hear your sharing of worries and fear

解去千百恨 莫讓暮氣心裡積壓

To let go of hatred in your heart, don't let them burdening you

樂事會再次重臨 路上有你我同行

Happiness will visit again, we have got each other on the road

幸運有你作良朋 齊心共勵同振奮

Lucky to have you as my best friend, lets encourage and inspire one another!

# Informal Survey

- In Sept 2014, an informal survey was presented to the community music group members focusing on their experiences of the group.
- Participants reported that they joined the CM group meeting regularly because they enjoyed:
  1. Singing and writing songs
  2. The friendship and bonding among the members
  3. Pleasures gained from the experiences.

# Informal Survey (contd)

- The aspects of the community music group they cherish include:
  1. Singing
  2. Writing songs
  3. Sharing and bonding in the group
  4. Performance
  5. Studio recording.
  
- As for improvement in their well being, participants reported:
  1. feeling happier
  2. feeling more relaxed
  3. feeling more connected to others
  4. feeling more validated.

# Community Music and Mental Recovery

- Music therapy (including CM) has been a popular form of expressive art therapy being adopted in mental health setting. Solli (2013) carried out meta-syntheses of 14 studies examining servicicer users' experiences in music therapy and four area of users' experiences was identified, they include:



# (1) Having a good time

- Through music, service users reported experiencing:
  - Pleasure and joy
  - Freedom and relaxation
  - Hope and motivation.



- *In my experience, music can really bring them positive feelings. After singing songs in CM meeting, service users often reported feeling very happy- may be because of (1) Singing itself (2) Movement of body (3) Singing songs with encouraging lyrics*

## (2) Being together

- Music could be a good arena for being together with other people and making social connections. Service users from the studies reported:
  - Higher sense of social belonging (being part of a music group)
  - Teamwork
  - Social connection
- *In my experience, CM can bring in a sense of “Team” to service user, especially during rehearsal and performance. To sing a song in tune with one another requires high degree of team work.*
- *Service users become closer to one another due to the regularity of the group. They are more willing to share their issues and received support during meeting.*



# (3)Feeling

- Music can be strongly connected to emotional experiences. Service users reported that:
  - Deeper awareness of emotion is achieved. The awareness of emotions was linked to music being a bridge between verbal knowledge and emotional, nonverbal knowledge.
  - Express emotions (e.g. playing an instrument by hitting to express anger).
  - Emotional regulation. This could be achieved in or out of sessions (e.g. started singing songs at home).
- *In my experience, singing/instrument playing can be useful to express emotion. Even listening back to songs (through CD) can help regulate emotions.*

# (4) Being someone

- Many studies reported that:
  - music allows people to experience and be reminded of “being someone” - a more positive identity was developed ( rather than being stigmatized, everyone is equal in music making);
  - Mastery ( self confidence improves as a result of mastery in music).
- *In my experience service users often say that they could never imagine they will write, sing and perform their songs on stage. They also cherish the experiences of studio recording.*
- *To be appreciated and welcomed by others in song sharing event helps.*

# Issues to be explored further:

- Music creation Vs Visual art ⇔ mental recovery
- The uniqueness of a singing team

# 開心快樂歌

加油努力你是最好

祝你身體快樂

笑容滿臉...哈哈哈哈哈

大家齊高興



The songs from CD can be  
listened to at this weblink:

- [http://www.sracp.org.hk/pp\\_song/](http://www.sracp.org.hk/pp_song/)