



Music as Healer

Karen Drucker

I looked out on the audience that night — at people holding each other, strangers putting their hand on the shoulder of someone crying, people with their eyes closed — just feeling and singing together. This was a group of people brought together at a church in Santa Rosa, California, for an evening of healing through music after the terrible fires that destroyed homes and lives in this community. The Northern California wildfires, also known as the Northern California Firestorm, was a series of 250 wildfires that started burning across the state of California in October 2017. Sonoma County and Napa County had the most devastation with thousands of homes and acres burned.

When I became aware of the fires and began hearing from friends about the devastation, I was stunned. I knew many people who had lost everything in that fire. What could I do? What could I possibly give?

I had been on the schedule to speak at the Center for Spiritual Living Santa Rosa church on the Sunday following the fires for quite a while. This was a church where I had been the music director many years ago, so it was very special to me to come back in the role of guest speaker and musician. They have three services each Sunday of about 500 per service and on

this particular Sunday, they would all be coming to have their hearts healed. I called the minister who I was to substitute for and asked if I should be the one to speak that day — what could I possibly say? The well-rehearsed talk I was planning to give was now obsolete. He said just show up, open your heart and let the words and music flow through you.

So I did — and it was healing both for the congregants and for me.

After that Sunday I felt the need to do more, so I decided to offer an evening of music — of people coming together to sing. Just sing. To lift their voices together and heal, cry and sometimes laugh, but mainly to be together in community.

Because that is what music does. It brings us together.

Look back to the main events in your life and see if there is a song that comes to mind. Most likely you have had songs that have played a part in the memories of your life — the good times, the bad breakups, the times you needed a little inspiration. Somehow a song would be there to capture exactly what you were feeling.



In all my years of being a professional musician, I have sung thousands of songs in every style imaginable. When I played at weddings or played in nightclubs I would select the right upbeat song to get people dancing or something romantic to get them to cuddle up. It was not until I started writing my own positive message healing songs that I really felt the true healing power of music. When my mother was diagnosed with cancer I felt so helpless. But when she told me that her daily affirmation was “I am healed, whole and healthy,” I had an epiphany — I realized I could combine different styles of music with positive messages to create a song. When she would go in for her weekly chemo infusions, my positive message music was playing in her ears with me singing, “I am healed whole and healthy.” I could literally see the effects that pairing affirmations with upbeat or soothing music had on her. The chemo may have been infusing her body, but at the same time the music was infusing her mind with a message of hope and healing.

And now, today, I am seeing once again the power of this music.

I am sitting in the little cottage of a close friend who is in the final days, maybe weeks, of being in her body after a long dance with cancer. She has assembled a group of her ten closest friends to help her in this phase of her journey and we are all doing our parts, taking turns showing up daily to attend to her physical and spiritual needs. While I have learned in a very humbling way that my talents do not include nursing skills or cooking, I was able to redeem myself when she spontaneously started to sing one of my songs. All of a sudden four of us surrounded her bed and began a 20-minute medley of some of my healing songs that she knew all the words to. The gift for me in all of this was that when we were done she said her pain, which had been at a level 4 before we started singing, was now at 0! I learned in that moment the true meaning of the word healing. It is not necessarily a curing, but rather a shift in consciousness within your heart — that healing can occur even in the midst of dying.

Later in the day the ultimate gift to her happened. Her young adult son, who has had a difficult time processing all of this, brought his guitar and I brought in my portable keyboard. We serenaded his mother with blues jams and old Beatles songs, and as she listened

she looked like a kid again. She even moved what she could of her body doing a little dance to “Twist and Shout” in her bed. Hans Christian Anderson said, “Where words fail, music speaks” and today the emotion that was happening in this room was expressed by simply playing and singing together — a sweet bonding that happened with music as the facilitator.

This may seem like a dramatic story, but I want to illustrate the power of music and encourage you to incorporate music as one of the tools you use to give yourself the permission to feel — to feel the joy, pain, sadness, gratitude, anger or whatever is below the surface that is wanting to be expressed. There have been times in my life when I was upset but the tears were just not coming. I have learned that all I need to do is listen to “Puff the Magic Dragon” and the floodgates will open and the tears will come out! Or when I am feeling great I can put on Pharrell Williams “Happy” and dance around like I am five! I listen and sing along with many positive message musicians whose music affirms my highest good so that I can remember that I am worthy and loved.

When a parent writes to me that their child walks around the house singing my chant “I am a blessing to the world” or that my music has replaced Barney in their car CD player, I am thrilled. I feel humbled and grateful when cancer patients tell me that in the middle of the night, when the fear creeps in, they can listen to one of my songs and it calms them down and turns off that worry voice. And now, with my sweet friend about to pass, she is telling me that it is my music that is calming her fears and helping her to let go. These are demonstrations of the power of music.

Music can heal. Music can inspire. Music is essential to our well-being. I invite you to listen to and sing positive message songs every day, and see what changes happen in your life. €



Author Karen Drucker can be found at www.KarenDrucker.com.