



29 - 31 May 2026

Warsaw , Poland

Singing Through Grief: A Review of Group Singing as A Tool for Continuing Bonds

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Abstract

Grief is a universal yet deeply personal experience, and many traditional forms of support do not always address the ongoing emotional and social needs of bereaved individuals. This research explores the development of a community-based group singing program for people navigating grief. The proposed program centres on participants choosing a song connected to their deceased loved one, which is then learned and sung together as a group. This shared act of music-making may help participants maintain continuing bonds with the deceased while also fostering collective empathy, emotional expression, and social connection.

Drawing on literature in music therapy, grief studies, community music programs, and social prescribing, this project examines how group singing may contribute to wellbeing and bereavement support. Particular attention is given to the role music can play in memory, identity, ritual, and communal experience, and how this may intersect with Klass et al.'s Continuing Bonds Theory. The research will also explore community perspectives through planned interviews with practitioners, community leaders, and individuals with lived experience of grief.

Rather than trialling the program itself, this project aims to create an evidence-based blueprint to guide future implementation and research. In doing so, the project contributes to the growing interdisciplinary discussions surrounding the role that creative arts may play in supporting health and wellbeing, particularly in community settings.

Keywords: Arts and Health; Bereavement Support; Community Music; Social Prescribing; Arts and Wellbeing