

The Same Thing Project, with support from the National Museum of Mental Health Project,
P R E S E N T S :



**COMMUNITY
SONGWRITING
FOR
MENTAL HEALTH
2022-23 College Tour**

? Looking for a small group event that can build positive emotions on your campus?

? Interested in an adventure doing something you've never done before that does not require leaving campus?

? Enjoy music and how it makes you feel?

? Not sure if you are creative or can help write a song?

**BOOK THE
Community Songwriting for Mental Health – College Tour**
for your campus. Contact **Mark Cutler** - mokcutler@gmail.com

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: **Community songwriting** (n.) (v.) discovering one's
: voice, alongside others, to create words and music for
: shared experiences and emotions - everyone becomes
: a songwriter. No music experience required.
:

THESE ARE THE “NOTES” WE HIT IN COMMUNITY SONGWRITING:

Joy **Creating**
Togetherness **Mindful**
Discovery **Sharing** **Adventure** **Accomplished**
Belonging **Uplifting** **Relaxed**
Respected **Kindness** **Hopeful**

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY SONGWRITING LOOK LIKE ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS?



Bringing Students Together Through the Power of Music | Dean College

“Mark Cutler of the Same Thing Project sure knows how to engage a group. Over twenty students participated in our session at Dean College; together, they crafted a wonderful song entitled: “What’s Gonna Happen.” Mark is expert at working with students with learning differences; his gentle, encouraging approach allowed everyone to participate and feel included. Building community through music, is there anything better?”

**~Michael Adamowicz,
Director of the Morton Family Learning Center, Dean College**

FAQs

What size of group is ideal for community songwriting?

Community songwriting works best for group sizes ranging from 5-30 participants.

How long is a community songwriting session?

It typically takes anywhere from 1-2 hours to create a new song.

What if I believe I have no musical ability? How can it be true that “everyone is a songwriter?”

Community songwriting is about breaking through aloneness and creating

togetherness. If you can participate in a conversation (nodding, speaking, etc.) then you can help write a song and be part of the process. It doesn't matter if you can sing. You can make a sound and that sound matters - whether humming a melody, clapping, or snapping your fingers. Sometimes the smallest responses and gestures can unleash the creativity of the group. Even if you don't verbally participate, your energy, eye-contact, and presence all make a difference in the creative process. Community songwriting is not about going "solo" but about being a part of the sound.

What is the process of community songwriting and how exactly does it work?

The process starts with a conversation and can even begin with an open-ended question to attendees like, "what's on your mind today?" One of the ideas within the conversation is identified as a potential topic, and then the group molds the conversation into a rhythm and a meter that can be turned into a song.

Someone with musical experience (typically with experience playing an instrument) will help identify the chord progressions from the group's suggestions as well as the beat. As the group starts writing, line-by-line, they continuously reflect on the overall meaning of the song so far, which shapes the direction of the song from then on.

Why and how is community songwriting beneficial for mental health?

The Same Thing Project believes that music is at the root of some of life's best emotions, especially when experienced together. Its weekly community songwriting workshops at the Outsider Collective in Pawtucket, R.I. include people from all walks of life - musicians, non-musicians, artists, retired folks, people with disabilities, and blue and white collar workers. The same joy, laughter, and tears are experienced by all, with each contribution from each songwriter, however small, having the same importance...as former strangers create community and co-write an original song.

Beyond the experiences we observe at our community songwriting workshops, emerging research indicates that songwriting and singing may help improve self-perceived quality of life, wellbeing, and health among senior citizens. During the summer of 2022, the City of Detroit Office of Arts, Culture, and Entrepreneurship kicked off a partnership that uses community songwriting to create conversations about mental health and wellbeing in the Black/African-American community.

I have heard of art therapy and music therapy - is community songwriting also therapy?

No, community songwriting is not therapy. At the heart of music and songwriting, however, is its ability to stir creativity and unleash the positive emotions that accompany the process of exploration and discovery. Letting go of one's ego and becoming part of something bigger; challenging fear with creativity; sharing feelings and stories; trusting others to do what one cannot do alone. Feeling bonds emerge among former strangers, as the self disappears and the song becomes the shared link between all songwriters in attendance. All of the emotions that accompany such an experience are what make community songwriting special.

Do the songs need to be about mental illness?

No, they can be about whatever topic emerges in the conversations at the start of the group. It is the community songwriting process itself that will boost spirits and create positive emotions and perspectives. It is o.k. for a group to stumble around in the face of the unknown at the start of the session in search of topic, only to find that serendipity and a sense of shared purpose stir creativity and help the group write the song it was intended to write – a song that could never have been predicted.

Who leads the community songwriting session?

Mark Cutler is founder of **The Same Thing Project**, one of the first organizations in the United States dedicated to community songwriting. Mark is an inductee in the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame for his work with the bands The Schemers and Raindogs and his solo work. The Schemers received national exposure on MTV after winning WBCN-Boston's legendary Rock & Roll Rumble. Mark's work with Raindogs included experimental collaborations with Iggy Pop and the actor Harry Dean Stanton and Raindogs toured nationally with the likes of Bob Dylan, Don Henley, and Warren Zevon. In 2014, Mark wrote the soundtrack for a PBS documentary about George Washington and Gilbert Stuart, and has also written soundtracks for various independent films.

What will happen to the song we will write?

By the end of the session, your group will have created a draft recording of your song, recorded live at the end of the session. The song's copyright will be shared by all who participate. Each person in attendance will be listed as a songwriter. The emotional benefits of community songwriting come through the process of creating an original work together. Some groups may decide they are interested in going into the studio to record their song. Separate arrangements and pricing for a studio recording can be explored by contacting Mark Cutler of the Same Thing Project at mokcutler@gmail.com.

What can community songwriting be compared to?

Community songwriting has few parallels because we believe all involved make contributions that have the same value. Where else in society can a group of people - who may not even know one another - come together to create something new, and in the process develop relationships with one another, sharing smiles and a sense of accomplishment? We have immense respect for the work of Habitat for Humanity and its work to bring volunteers together to build homes for those in need. The Same Thing Project seeks to create this same community spirit.

How much does it cost to bring the Community Songwriting for Mental Health College Tour to my campus?

For colleges and universities in Southern New England, including Eastern Massachusetts, the cost of a songwriting session is \$350. For colleges and universities in Northern New England and Western Massachusetts, a travel surcharge will also apply to cover the cost of gasoline, etc.



The Community Songwriting for Mental Health – College Tour has received support from the **National Museum of Mental Health Project** whose mission is, “strengthening mental health literacy through the arts nationwide by bringing the exhibition to you.”

The National Museum of Mental Health Project is a nonprofit organization that blends the unique educational components of exhibitions, museums, and technology to build mental health literacy and understanding.

During 2022-23 the National Museum of Mental Health Project is curating a virtual exhibition and mosaic about mental health and wellness in the 2020s named ***I Get It.***

For more about ***I Get It.*** or to submit a video, performance, or piece of art for consideration, [click here](#).