

A Supportive Songwriting Group Plan

VISION: A creatively supportive and diverse group of people who meet regularly to inspire and help each individual participant to develop their songwriting skills.

(inspired by Kristina Olsen's songwriting class)

People: a diverse group of people with varying experience, genres and interests but with a shared passion for the craft of songwriting.

Venue: a place that is easy for all participants to get to and be able to share their creative ideas eg: a private lounge room or a quiet pub corner.

Time: once a month, for a few hours.

Proceedings: Each month, every participant brings a new or re-worked song, song fragment or idea to share, with a few printed lyric sheets. The group offers their feedback which the songwriter chooses to take on as they wish. See below for suggestions on how to give effective feedback.

Note: The song remains the creative property of the presenting songwriter.

How to give good feedback: Remember that people's songs are very close to their heart: a songwriting group is akin to a therapy group in its need for emotional safety and mutual respect. Especially when the group is new, an emphasis must be placed on creating a **CREATIVELY SAFE SPACE** for all participants. You might like to suggest that each individual sets the boundaries for what kind of feedback they would like. Or, this is a pretty safe starting point:

1. Firstly say what you like or enjoyed about the song or performance: make it real because **WE ALL KNOW** when people are dis-genuine. You may need to practice this skill if you are used to being super-critical or are a "tell-it-to-me-straight-with-no-sugar" type of communicator (you yourself may indeed want this approach, that is fine)
2. Ask what sort of feedback they would like.
3. If they say "anything" they don't mean trash it. They really usually don't. They want something they can understand and use to make the song better.
4. Remember everyone is different and has different tastes: this is a good thing and will create strength in your songwriting skills.
5. Frame your feedback for change in your own context: "For me, I got a bit lost after the 3rd verse"
6. and offer a concrete suggestion of how to make the improvement you suggest in a way they can easily refuse if they disagree "I think another chorus there might help. Or even a melodic bridge of some kind. You might like to try this" and give them an example of what you mean.