Finding Me in Music (TIA[1]): A Trauma Informed Course for Empowering Educators

Overview TIE course, Cohort 2, 2026

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1. Introduction

In this capstone project, *Finding Me in Music (TIA)*. I aim to develop a course, which uses a trauma informed music-centric approach. to support educators. My intention is to empower teachers to shift from merely surviving the emotional demands of the classroom to cultivating a grounded, self-led way of being. This project will produce and pilot-test a short course supported by reflective workbooks and peer-based learning.

Goals of Project:

- To develop, pilot test, implement and evaluate a short course for teachers, called *Finding Me in Music (TIA).*
- To produce course content, exercises, learning processes and protocols, including self-study workbooks, dyad exercises, guidelines for listening
- To embrace the trauma care principle of empowerment, demonstrating how it can be embodied in a music-oriented approach.
- To explore how and why, an embodied sense of empowerment and agency can be possible through intentional listening to music.

Personal background

I am the Founder of *Finding Us in Music*, a music-centric approach designed to help people listen to themselves, to one another, and to music in a deeper, more intentional way. As a trained creative arts therapist, I have developed the theory and practice of *Finding Us in Music* (FUIM) and published a chapter outlining the thinking and offering a case study for practitioners.[2] This body of work and subsequent training courses, integrates concepts and methodologies from several disciplines to build the core pillars. They include creative arts

[1] TIA means Trauma informed approach

[2] Nussbaum, B (2018)

therapy principles, appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, aesthetics education, and the effort-shape work of Rudolf Laban[3]; Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligence[4]. Together, this transdisciplinary framework supports individuals in naming and claiming their strengths and, in group contexts, fosters social flourishing and relational attunement.

The trauma-informed principle

Guiding the proposed course is the trauma principle of **empowerment through voice and choice**. The underlying assumption is that music, when engaged with awareness and intention, becomes a mirror of life — a medium that can illuminate inner truths, evoke authenticity, and strengthen agency.

In trauma-informed education, empowerment involves shifting out of being someone shaped and inhibited by external pressures to becoming an active curator of his/her internal landscape. I define voice and choice below.

- **Voice:** Music supports teachers in reconnecting with the power and beauty of their internal emotional landscape. The music offers access to an authentic inner voice that names and claims inner strengths. The invitation to listen to the inner voice, offering a form of intrapersonal resonance and inner attunement that restores a sense of self often eroded by classroom pressures and institutional demands.
- **Choice:** The act of creating a personal musical sanctuary and then curating an intentional playlist, becomes an embodied experience in agency. It is a declaration of how one chooses to shift internally and how one chooses to show up — more present, more integrated, and more aligned — both in personal life and in the classroom.

This project ultimately offers educators a trauma-informed pathway back to inner steadiness — a way to recalibrate, restore and reclaim agency.

2. **Personal motivation***:*

For the past 20 years, I have pioneered, tried and tested and trained facilitators and coaches in two processes: *Finding Me in Music* and *Finding Us in Music.* Through my own journey towards wholeness and because of my sincere desire to serve educators, I have recognised the relevance of trauma informed principles and the necessity to update and deepen my work. . I would like to contribute towards a **pedagogy of hope** — a framework that invites

[3] Laban Rudolph
[4] Garner, H: Frames of Mind

educators to envision and embody more humane, dignifying possibilities for themselves and the students in their classrooms. Scalable, low-cost, and culturally adaptable, this approach, could potentially fill a critical gap by providing educators with accessible tools for reflection, using music more intentionally as a vehicle for empowerment

3. Brief description of Capstone Project

The goal of the pilot course, *Finding Me in Music (TIA)* is to restore a grounded, embodied sense of self. It offers teachers an intentional approach to creating a playlist and curating a "Sonic Sanctuary"—a restorative inner space where they can recalibrate, listen inwardly, and reclaim personal agency. Through reflective listening and the exploration of lived experience through music, this predominantly experiential course offers a curriculum which guides educators toward a practice of radical self-hospitality, dignity, and empowerment.

4. Outcomes:

Teachers will feel both a sense of competence and confidence in using music as a vehicle for self- care and empowerment. They will have learned to use music and reflection to embody and anchor their own unique voice and choice.

Participants will leave with:

- A reliable music-centric practice for embodied self-regulation
- Masterful integration of music and meaning making, learning to become a compassionate witness to themselves.
- A renewed sense of dignity, clarity and empowered agency
- Practical tools to lead and teach from a place of thriving, greater confidence and resilience.

In summary, this course seeks to offer teachers the potential for deeper wellbeing and restoration. They will discover a resource for courage as well as empowerment: a pathway to face the chaos, urgency, and emotional residue of the school day. The intention is that they expand their agency, and cultivate the inner stability required to create trauma-responsive classrooms.

Ultimately, the program affirms a simple but transformative truth: when educators are restored, resourced, and empowered, the entire learning environment shifts.

5. Application Strategy:

Implementation Steps

Finalize Curriculum Design

Refine the draft curriculum and complete development of the full suite of materials: workbooks, slides, handouts, reflection sheets, listening guidelines, and structured intentional playlists, individual and dyad assignments. All materials will be designed with trauma-informed principles of safety, self-regulation, and choice.

Identify and Confirm Pilot Partners

- Engage potential partners from existing networks and secure 2–3 institutions willing to participate in piloting the course.
- Collaborate with each partner to determine optimal timing, delivery format, and criteria for selecting participants.
- Contract with pilot partners that their role will include oversight, implementing feedback mechanisms to ensure that the protocols are safe.

Select Participants

Recruit a cohort of **15–20 educators** who are currently in postgraduate teacher-training programs or actively teaching. Modules will ideally be completed within a **6–8-week** timeframe to support continuity and integration.

Deliver the Course

Offer a **2- or 3-module short course**, depending on partner needs and scheduling constraints. Sessions will be delivered online or in person, with attention to accessibility and emotional safety.

Provide Ongoing Support

Offer optional coaching and support for participants who request additional guidance. Provide clear listening guidelines for both self-reflection and dyad work to ensure safe engagement with potentially emotionally evocative material.

Assign Structured Learning Tasks

Participants will complete compulsory assignments, including:

- Course work assignments
- A curated playlist of **10–12 tracks**, selected from one of two thematic pathways
- A written reflective narrative linking their musical choices to their own meaning making process. The goal is to support delegates with integrating their learning.

- Dyad exercises designed to practice listening, witnessing, resonance, and cultivate the capacity to be present for self and other.
- Personal journaling

These assignments, together with feedback from participants and partner institution liaisons, will help determine the strengths and weaknesses of the course and whether the course and workbooks can be used independently or require facilitator oversight.

6. Evaluation and Data Collection

To assess feasibility, safety, and scalability, the pilot will include:

- Pre- and post-course reflective surveys
- Optional qualitative interviews
- Feedback from institutional partners
- Facilitator observations regarding emotional safety and participant experiences.

This data will inform refinement of the curriculum, materials, and facilitation guidelines.

7. Ethical Considerations

Given the emotional potency of music, the pilot will include:

- Clear informed-consent procedures
- Guidelines for emotional self-care
- Recommendations for when referral to additional support may be appropriate

These safeguards ensure that the program remains aligned with best practices in trauma-informed education.

8. Scalability and Replication

Following evaluation and refinement, the project will assess whether the *TIFMIM* course and workbooks:

- Can be safely used without a trained facilitator
- Require a hybrid model (self-guided + optional support, including peer support)
- Need facilitator training for ethical delivery

If the protocols demonstrate safety and efficacy, they may be scaled and distributed widely.

9. Conclusion

Potential Impact:

Trauma informed Finding Me in Music potentially contributes a unique and urgently needed framework to trauma-informed education by focussing on the educator's inner life as the foundation for presence- based teacher care. Integrating creative arts therapy principles, trauma care principles, and the experience of intrapersonal resonance, it offers a structured pathway from survival to thriving through empowerment. By providing accessible tools for regulation, reflection, and empowerment, ultimately transforming classroom climates from the inside out.

Finding Me in Music (TIA)has the potential to contribute to the field of trauma-informed care by offering a scalable, low-cost, replicable model that prioritises educator well-being as foundational rather than optional. Its music-based tools are fairly simple and adaptable across cultures, making them easy to integrate into schools, tertiary education, training programs, and community settings. By prioritizing nervous-system regulation and embodied self-care, the approach might well address a critical gap: the chronic burnout and secondary trauma experienced by educators. This framework strengthens resilience at the source, creating healthier classrooms, more regulated adults, and trauma-responsive learning environments.

Cautionary note: As a creative arts therapist, I have been trained to recognize the profound power of music. I have facilitated and witness the degree of emotion that can be expressed through a different experience of music. Music, like all the arts can be deeply therapeutic without any facilitation and guidance. However, music can also evoke strong affect, memories, or overwhelm. For this reason, it is essential that any music-oriented program—particularly one designed for educators who may already be carrying significant stress—be delivered with care, containment, and clear ethical boundaries.

The curriculum and workbook must therefore be intentionally designed to prioritize safety, pacing, and choice. A secondary, but no less important aim of this capstone project is to determine whether participants can reliably use these trauma-informed resources independently or in peer dyads, without the holding of a trained facilitator. The proposed plans for implementation and evaluation will help clarify what additional competencies, supervision structures, or training may be required for those who teach the course or guide

others through the workbook. An example of one workbook will be uploaded as an artifact. The course is still in the process of development.[5]

The project's findings will shape the ethical framework for broader dissemination. If the feedback demonstrates that teachers can stand safely on their own—using this approach without feeling triggered, overwhelmed or re-traumatised—the course ,could be scaled and shared widely,. Only after careful evaluation, refinement, and ethical review will I, in consultation with others determine, the appropriate scope and optimal conditions for replication and distribution If all goes well, it would be my honour to have this course. included the various platforms connected to Dr. Mays Imad's work.

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[5] An example of one of the workbooks, Becoming an African Lion/ess will be included as an artifact. The course and related materials are in the process of being developed.