Music Therapy with Young People in Schools: After the Black Saturday Fires

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Kate Teggelove is currently Acting National Director for the Sing & Grow Early Intervention Project in Australia and has a professional interest in parent-child attachment and music therapy for the redevelopment of neural pathways damaged by chronic trauma during childhood. In 2009 Kate volunteered to establish the ReGeneration Music Therapy Project in response to the Black Saturday bushfires of February 7. Under her coordination, the project went on to offer music therapy services in schools to over 100 children and adolescents severely impacted by the devastating event.

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Supplementary Files

I could be me  For 2 others  Forever longing

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How to Cite

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Abstract

The Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 resulted in the largest loss of life as the consequence of a natural disaster recorded in Australian history. The community music therapy project described in this paper took place in a secondary school affected by the fires six months later. Three groups of young men and women participated in ten weeks of music therapy groups where they were empowered to choose the content and focus of sessions. Each young person had been impacted in some way by the fires and this was expressed either through improvisations, song writing or song sharing, resulting in a sense of relief. Although it was important that other group members understood the impact of the bushfires, the young people were more inclined to focus on positive opportunities for growth within the groups and appreciated the fun and freedom of sessions. They described how "musicing" opened a door for new experiences, both musically and personally, where they were able to more confidently express themselves once group cohesion had been established. The relevance of community music therapy theory is considered in light of the emphasis on coping by the young people and compared to the implications of adopting a trauma orientation in the context of a natural disaster.

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