

Special Unit 2

Sing Together, Build Bonds

Old pictures often depict people singing together in church, with their families at home or with companions at community events. Unfortunately, these scenes have become less common nowadays. There could be several reasons why singing in a group has become less common. First, we spend less time in groups these days and are more isolated. Technology has made it easier to enjoy music individually rather than in a larger setting. Instead of being played in a large setting and under social circumstances, music has become something enjoyed privately on our personal play devices. Second, our society is more diverse, so we don't always know the same songs. The list of music that is common to different groups of people is becoming shorter. We might also worry more about our social image, and singing in front of others can make us feel awkward. Lastly, we have more entertainment options today than in the past when people gathered around the piano or the guitar just because it was fun to do so.

Although group singing has become less common, it's an activity that can be beneficial. So why does group singing make us feel so good? Decades of research have shown that singing is good for you on many levels by reducing stress and increasing the release of happiness hormones such as endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin. Singing with others has additional benefits. It brings people closer together and helps create bonds that can support self-esteem in a more stable way. The sense of belonging and purpose created in the moment makes us feel connected to others and to something greater. Thus, it's no surprise that people who sing together have healthier minds and more readily participate in their communities. A few studies have reported that people who sang in choirs were more optimistic, less lonely, had stronger relationships, and were more likely to contribute positively to their communities than those who didn't. The good news is that people can enjoy these benefits even when they're singing with others online. Being together is the key.

The communal nature of music remains and is vividly demonstrated at live concerts. Whether you're in the crowd at the Mercury Lounge or Madison Square Garden, the point is to gather with people who love what you love. If the point wasn't to gather or to share in the mass performance, you'd just stay home and listen to music by yourself. When you sing along to songs at a concert, you don't just listen to the music; you participate in it, "completing" the musical experience. This creates a sense of belonging and a strong bond with the musician. Many musicians remember the first time their audience sang along with them. Maybe it means they have reached the point in their career where they have become popular. Even singers with long, successful careers feel energized by the power of the crowd and get inspired for their next music project.

Korean pop music fans are famous for their singing-along during concerts, and their participation in the concert sometimes goes beyond the conventional expectations of musicians. Artists performing in Korea are often impressed by the audience singing, called tte-chang. What's so impressive is that they memorize entire songs in English or even in other foreign languages.

Before going to a concert, loyal fans look at the set list, memorize the lyrics of all the songs, and plan a tte-chang event to make their concert experience special. In this way, Korean fans show that they really care about the music and the musicians. There are countries where silent appreciation is expected from the concert audience, but at Korean pop music concerts, enthusiastic participation in tte-chang often accompanied by dancing is the norm.

In a highly connected world where technology doesn't necessarily connect people in a human way, individuals become socially isolated and feel intense loneliness. The invention of portable music players and earphones has made music more personal, too. However, the communal elements persist, manifesting their power in singing events, large and small. Singing with others can be a way to heal and help us feel connected, happy, and healthy. Maybe it is in our genes as a social species. Just open your mouth, start making a sound, and let your voice go. You'll know how good it is almost instantly.