

Southampton Youth Inclusion Music Network



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Supported using public funding by
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Overcoming shyness with music activities (HSP)

Meet Lissie... a case study

Lissie is a participant at Southampton Youth Inclusion Music Network (SYIMN) which provides music mentorship and activities for young people in NEET or unable to access music activities or education due to socio-economic reasons or other disadvantages.

Often participants that come to SYIMN suffer too many anxieties to attend state education and have been removed from the normal school environment due to their difficulties. We notice these participants regularly fall into the category of Highly Sensitive People (HSP).

Research shows:

High sensitivity itself is not a disorder, however, in negative, unfavorable conditions it may correlated with numerous psychological difficulties.

This trait in young people has been described as HSP.

'Highly sensitive children are described as reactive, easily prone to stress, shy, inhibited in their behavior. However, in a favorable environment, highly sensitive children perform better than their peers: they achieve better grades in school, have more constructive moral attitudes, higher levels of social competency, higher levels of self-regulation and a greater sense of security resulting from experiencing the love of their families (Aron 2002; Pluess, Belsky2013).'

<https://highlysensitive.eu/en/the-highly-sensitive-child-as-a-challenge-for-education-introduction-to-the-concept/>

Lissie's SYIMN story...

Alongside autism, Lissie is a highly sensitive young person and when she came to us almost a year ago, was obviously reserved, and shy when engaging with others.

Lissie came once, then felt too anxious to come the following week. She continued to come along to SYIMM on and off for a few weeks participating in production, plus a few encouraging 1-2-1's with our coach, gradually Lissie developed the confidence to become a regular face at SYIMN.

Lissie was 17 when she first arrived, and she had been producing music 'self-taught' at home. Her genre is vocal synth rock, and she already has her own YouTube channel under the name Rishie-P with 23.9K subscribers!

This is her cover of the Japanese track Kacchi Muite Baby <https://youtu.be/IsM5f30waQ8> which has already had 201K views!

Our producers soon recognized Lissie has wonderful production talent. Since being with us her technical production skills have increased and her confidence has reached the level where she has performed in front of a live audience, which Lissie told us when she first arrived, was an unthinkable thing to do.

How SYIMN is helping Lissie?

First of all, Lissie took part in three activities. Production, confidence/community building performance, plus 1-2-1 confidence coaching.

Music activities

With production, Lissie either worked on her own with a producer, extending Lissie's technical skills or working on a genre specific production project in a small group supported by our SYIMN leaders. This continued for a couple of months, and it was during this time our music leaders started to encourage her to sing. Soon after this Lissie started having singing lessons, although we noticed not keen to be observed doing so.

Performance Activity

In her group performance class Lissie was not singled out to do anything at first, this was to give her group experience and allow her to familiarize herself with the group activities and setting.

Lissie was very shy, so we never tried to draw her out but let her feel her way out over the first few months.

The class is all about managing own emotional state in the context of performing and how this helps manage life in the adult world both personally and professionally.

Performance and community building exercises

We include lots of different exercises, to build community spirit. For example, to help break social inhibitions and improve confidence we get them into pairs to tell each other positive stories about their lives. Telling a story of something they always wanted to have/do/achieve, what happened and how they felt when they finally got it.

The purpose of this sort of exercise is to have them notice how their feelings are during and after describing such an experience, helping participants learn to be aware of internal states and how feelings change when listening and talking about pleasurable events.

This generates a relaxed yet fun atmosphere, and we want participants to notice that buzz, and learn how to replicate this on stage and in other circumstances where generating a positive state would be useful.

We might ask those that we know will be comfortable (or we think are ready to be stretched) to repeat the story their partner told them to whole group, getting them to feel how to get a good story flowing in a group setting and start asking great questions to gather more information to extend the experience.

Storytelling

Comprehension of the science of great story telling is a fantastic ability for any music performer as it's an obvious aspect of reaching and connecting with the audience between songs, building rapport with the audience.

We touch upon which stories generate different neurochemistry, for example, dopamine is generated with stories that have an element of suspense and anticipation, knowing how to generate dopamine in your audience when on stage, either by your stories or your music means you will have their attention.

With storytelling knowledge, comes the ability of being able to really express and engage with an audience, this builds stage confidence, generating greater self-assurance in general and eventually strengthening traits of leadership.

Working with each other like this is helping our participants learn to communicate with others, whilst generating positive states of connection.

SYIMN group work

Lissie Performs...

We have had our venue area extended and our first event was SYIMN's Christmas showcase event. We were very surprised when Lissie decided to sing a song at the event.

This was the first time any of us outside of production or her singing lesson and the small group Lissie was making music with had heard her sing, so we were delighted and excited when she decided to perform.

Lissie performing at SYIMN Xmas showcase <https://youtu.be/jD0sYxO58Ls>

Parent feedback

Lissie's mum says: 'Lissie started SYIMN as a keen but very nervous student. Going into a new environment is a daunting prospect for anyone, but for Lissie, this was tenfold. Her anxiety levels were at a record high, and she was completely nocturnal. Starting SYIMN was a huge turning point for Lissie. Not only was this the only activity she would change her sleeping patterns for, she had finally found a place of acceptance, enjoyment and fulfilment, all while doing the thing she loves most in the world - making music. Since starting SYIMN, Lissie's confidence has grown exponentially, to the point she is now volunteering at River Studios on a Friday. I can confidently say SYIMN at River Studios is a lifeline for Lissie.'

Lissie volunteering...

Lissie has now come such a long way with us that we invited her on our volunteer program.

So, she now comes in once a week and helps the younger ones with their production activities. This is a big step for Lissie, as she feels she is doing regular things others of her age are doing, yet she has never been able to do before.

Lissie tells us she 'always knew she was different', that is why she could never attend school. However, we have found, in a creative and gentle nurturing environment, such as SYIMN, young people like this start showing they can thrive.

To summarize...

We feel music like Lissie is producing today is a great example of what talent is available from highly sensitive young people that find it difficult to find their place in the world. Lissie's journey with us at SYIMN shows when in the right environment young people like Lissie start to flourish and reveal what is possible to achieve.

Lissie's track - Sea Shell Girl <https://youtu.be/-qlj9bSgeeQ>

Video link to Lissie's SYIMN story - <https://youtu.be/ES-ZyTv5erw>

Lissie's SYIMN journey is a great example of what is happening for young people attending the project. We aim for the process to be transformative, by gently inspiring participants to challenge themselves to make new and progressive achievements in a fun and nurturing environment.

This way we are excited to keep discovering hidden talent like Lissie's in our region, waiting to emerge from those that have had barriers to access this kind of creative environment before. Most are not like Lissie, who has anonymously already generated a following, and do not have the knowledge to develop themselves this way.

We are all so grateful to Music Youth for helping us continue to make this happen!

We are always interested to hear from others who have found useful methods to help HP people. Please let us know what useful techniques are you are using to help young people like this?