



8 LIFE LESSONS

from singing in a choir



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1. When we work together, we can accomplish anything



I could always carry a tune. I wasn't a bad singer but I knew there were singers with more talent. When I first starting singing in a choir, I quickly recognized the sum of all our voices was much greater than my individual voice. Perhaps more important, I discovered; when I sang with others, I learned the music faster and I had others around me on who I could rely. OK...not everyone, but there were enough singers to help me learn my part and help achieve what the director wanted. When we worked together as a choir, there was nothing we couldn't make sound better than my wailing in the car or the shower.

2. I learned how to listen

Seems ridiculous; singing taught me how to listen and what to listen for. One of the keys in singing in a choir is listening to those around you. Not just those singing the same pitches but the other voice parts. I learned it wasn't just my voice that needed to be heard. I needed to step back, listen and give all those around me a voice in what we were creating.





3. It's not about me...it's always about us



With most of the jobs I have had, everything was about my personal performance. I admit, impressing the boss was the key to the next promotion or raise. Singing in a choir taught me the importance of team work. I learned my greatest accomplishments weren't really mine alone. They happened because an entire group of people contributed their very best to the music or product we were creating. I learned a choir isn't just about the "best" voices, it's about allowing everyone to bring their unique gifts to the music. When I am encouraged to bring my strengths to workplace or rehearsal, I don't fear failure. My weaknesses will be made up by the strengths of those around me..

4. Love is worthy of my time

I always liked to sing but there was a time I simply wouldn't make time for it. You know the routine and priorities - singing just wouldn't fit the schedule. I literally forced myself to spend a couple of hours every week on me. Returning to something that had always brought me joy. It was hard and it didn't happen overnight - I carried the usual





"selfish" guilt for the first couple of months. Unexplainably, I found myself looking forward to those rehearsals. The concerns of the day didn't seem quite so monumental. I found I didn't just like singing - I began to anticipate what we could create in those two hours. I came to discover the joy I experienced when singing carried over into the next work day. I found myself whistling and singing those crazy "choir" songs at the strangest times and in some weird places. Rekindling a lost love was worthy of my time.



5. Everyone has pain

Through the music we sang, a realization came to me. Despite the current celebrity news, no one has an idyllic life. Everyone has pain. Everyone has times of great joy...if we are willing to recognize it. My biggest challenge was processing those emotions. In singing, I found the entire realm of human emotions. Uplifting lyrics inspired me. Sad lyrics gave me opportunity to share emotions through words I could not find nor do I have the talent to put to paper. Melodies and lyrics have become therapy and given me a voice to express the emotions, reality and ideals of my human experience.





6. Family doesn't always mean relatives

I called my section leader to let him know I wouldn't be at rehearsal. I would be out of town for the funeral of my grandfather. In the weekly email, my section leader had shared the information along with my address. Within a couple of days, there were sympathy cards from guys I sang with along with some from people I didn't know by name. When I returned to rehearsal the following week people came up to me to express their condolences and asked about how I was dealing with the loss. I learned these people cared about one another and family isn't always defined by relatives.



7. It feels good to be needed

After my week away, the two guys who sit next to me and one from the row in front of me made a point to share that they had missed me. OK...the guy to my right indicated the guy to my left screws up Page 5 unless he has me singing next to him. The guy in the front row claims neither one of my singing partners can carry a tune unless I am there. John, who sits to my left just said, "I missed you last week." It feels good to be missed and needed.





8. Words have meaning

"*Peace* should always be sung softly and beautifully."

"*Hate* should never be sung beautifully - it's not."

"You should always linger a little when you sing the word *love* - it is our greatest human need - don't pass it up."

"If you repeat the phrase - *I Love You*, don't make the second time sound the same as the first - mean it - make the audience feel you are looking directly in their eyes."

"*Kiss* doesn't always mean long and sloppy."

"The word *all* doesn't leave anything or anyone out."

"*We* is always stronger than *I*."

"*Sleep* shouldn't sound as if there is a jackhammer in the room."

"*Joy* should always sound elated - like holding your newborn child or Christmas morning - not the crazy woman who lives two doors down."



I've learned a lot about myself and the world around me by singing in a choir. There is nothing like voices coming together and giving life to dots and lines on a piece of paper. I am not the best singer but I bring my best self to rehearsals and concerts. Together WE experience and share life's rollercoaster.