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July, 2011

**ANTI BULLYING & ANTI DISCRIMINATION**

*Plato once said that music "is a more potent instrument than any other for education".*

Music is an undeniable source of connection. I have said it before, but we can all take a piece of music from somewhere and connect it to a place, time, event – something. It can evoke emotion, timelessness, peace, memories, even fury, lessons can be learnt, but whatever the means.....the association is there. It's real and accessible anytime you want it.

In saying this, the same principle can be attached to teaching young children about the effects of **bullying & anti-discrimination** and the often long term dire consequences associated with it. Using music as the instrument to associate & therefore connect the subject matter, allows children a chance to absorb the message without confrontation, without fear. Making the song fun & interactive is the start, engaging your kids. Actions can be done to consolidate the story line in the verses and chorus etc.

Open discussions about the meaning of the song can then lead to brainstorming & even in the very young, it's possible they will have ideas on how to cope with it if they become the victim, they witness it etc. Open the discussion in the classroom or in the home after listening to the song "What do you think bullying is about"??? "What is meant by 'being a bully'"? "When you see someone in a wheelchair, someone who is blind (associated with the song) how does this make you feel"? At home, it may be a simple act like one child taking another child's toy or pushing someone over, making them cry. "How does that make you feel when you do that"? "How do you think it makes the other child feel when you do that"? With older children, you could bring in racial, sex, cultural, physical, emotional discrimination to name a few. So often I hear parents & teachers say kids don't have respect anymore. How can they if they don't respect themselves first? It is up to us, parents, teachers, carers, grandparents all of us who have values, to teach our kids responsibilities and consequences of their actions.

We can't address **bullying & anti-discrimination** without somehow making these kids aware that there **are** often long term & horrific consequences to this unacceptable behaviour. I am passionate about finding ways to reduce youth suicide & self harm, and the one way I do know, is to start educating early - while these children are very young. Combine that with the power of music & we may just have a new way of addressing the problem.

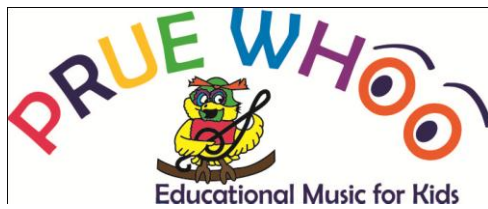
I do not profess to be an expert with lots of letters after my name, nor can I produce a piece of paper confirming my years of education at the establishments of universities and secondary colleges of advanced education. My qualifications come from life experience. From observation. From being one of those teenagers ostracised from groups because of my body shape, from motherhood, from watching my children grow & learn to accept themselves and others for who they are, from understanding how the delivery of music can touch and change someone, from nearly 20 years working with children using my music to educate them and how in turn that process can change the way teachers and parents think about the value of music. Human nature is such however, that not all of us take the risk to try something new, and there lies our dilemma. For me, the passion remains to educate the educators and parents the value of music and the power it has to reach, touch and perhaps change the way we think.

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International Educational Music Programs for Kids

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Statistics:

\* For the group 15-34 years of age, suicide is today one of the three leading causes of death in all countries (where mortality data is available). In the United States (2001) suicide was the third leading cause of death, among people between 15 and 24 years of age, with a rate of 9.9/100,000.

\* It is uncertain how many suicide attempts there are for each suicide death. Different studies estimate a number between 10 and 20. In general, there are more attempts per suicide among women and younger people. Research also show that around 80 percent of attempted suicides among young people are preceded by clear warning signs.

*Bibliography:* <http://web4health.info/en/answers/bipolar-suicide-statistics> - *Youth & Teen Suicide Statistics*

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