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From Affect to Artistry: Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role in Supporting Artistic Resilience and Expression

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Project Proposal

The Context

Singing requires a complex integration of physiological and psychological processes (Walker et al., 2022; Hao et al., 2015), and many singers, including myself, experience emotional interference that affects performance (Yang et al., 2025). Strong emotional responses like self-doubt, fear of failure, and perfectionism impact physical coordination and expression (Helding, 2020), while anxiety and depression can affect breath regulation, muscle tension, and vocal freedom (Van den Bogert et al., 2021). Davidson (2017) highlights that cognitive and emotional states directly influence vocal control, demonstrating the need to examine their interplay in pedagogy.

Despite widespread acknowledgment of these challenges, traditional instruction often emphasizes technique while overlooking emotional factors (Ragan, 2018; Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). In my experience, emotional interference is frequently framed as performance anxiety, a recognized issue in music psychology (Nagel, 1987; Wilson and Roland, 2002). However, focusing only on anxiety as a clinical or performance-specific phenomenon may overlook the broader role of affect in vocal training. Affect differs from emotion in that it is a more deeply embodied phenomenon (Gill, 2016), manifesting through physical responses rather than solely cognitive awareness. This

distinction is crucial in the context of singing, where emotional experiences are directly linked to breath control, muscle coordination, and sound production (Natke, Donath and Kalveram, 2003; Helding, 2020).

The Justification

The decision to undertake this study is both personal and pedagogical. I've worked with students who struggle with emotional interference and have experienced it myself. Navigating strong emotional responses while in the studio and while performing has been an ongoing struggle for me, shaping both my own vocal development and my approach to teaching. These experiences, along with literature, highlight how affect and vocal function are interconnected, yet insufficiently addressed in mainstream Western pedagogies (Miller, 1996; Helding, 2020).

Kenny (2011) and Wilson and Roland (2002) explore cognitive strategies for managing anxiety, and Helding (2020) calls for the integration of neuroscience and psychology into teaching. There is also significant research linking emotional states with vocal challenges (Barlow, 2002; Sapolsky, 2004). However, despite the availability of this information, it is unclear how many voice instructors are aware of, value, or practically implement these findings in their teaching.

Klickstein (2009) encourages a holistic approach, integrating mental strategies with technique, while Carey and Grant (2015) note that teachers' personal experiences shape their sensitivity to emotional issues. Teachers who've overcome emotional challenges often feel more equipped to help students.

This project will examine how emotional factors affect vocal performance, how teachers perceive and address them, and whether existing research is being practically applied. I will use questionnaires, interviews, and a pilot lesson series to assess whether further translation of research into usable tools is needed. The project will also explore how teachers can support students without crossing into therapeutic roles.

The Intended Impact

This study aims to increase awareness among voice instructors about affect's role in singing by examining the physiological and experiential effects of emotional states. I will investigate how emotions like anxiety, self-doubt, and overwhelm disrupt breath flow, coordination, and expressivity. Through questionnaires, interviews, and reflective practice, I will examine how often emotional interference arises, how teachers currently respond, and what strategies students find helpful.

If evidence shows effective strategies are already in use but not widely shared, this could lead to the development of a pedagogical resource. However, my primary goal is to assess current practices before proposing new materials.

An important aim is to explore whether emotional interference belongs within vocal instruction or requires referral to therapy. Some teachers incorporate somatic tools, breath work, and reframing strategies (Gill, 2016), while others believe strong emotions fall outside a teacher's remit (Helding, 2020; Klickstein, 2009). Nagel (1987) and Ristad (1982) propose a middle ground, where instructors acknowledge emotion without assuming a therapist's role. My study will explore how teachers currently navigate this balance.

The Outlined Intention

This study will address three core questions:

1. How do strong emotions and embodied affective states impact vocal performance?

2. To what extent do instructors integrate awareness and strategies for managing these experiences?

3. What approaches do teachers and students find effective in addressing emotional interference?

To explore these questions, I will employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), who emphasize the value of methodological pluralism in capturing the complexity of

educational practices. This study will include a critical literature review, anonymous questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with voice instructors, and sample lessons with student participants, followed by participant feedback. These methods will work together to provide a triangulated understanding of how emotional interference is experienced and addressed in the singing studio.

I will conduct one-on-one interviews with voice instructors, drawing on the qualitative interview framework outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), which emphasizes the importance of exploring personal perspectives and lived experience. Instructors will be asked to reflect on their perceptions of emotional interference and the extent to which they consciously address it in their teaching. This aligns with findings by Carey and Grant (2015), who note that teachers' beliefs and backgrounds strongly influence their pedagogical decisions regarding emotional issues. Student participants will also be invited to discuss emotional challenges encountered in their singing practice and whether they have received useful strategies to navigate them. All interview data will be thematically coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive analysis procedures, whereby patterns are identified and themes are generated by the researcher through careful interpretation of participant responses.

In addition to interviews, I will distribute anonymous online questionnaires to both student and teacher populations. Questionnaires are an efficient method for collecting broad insights while minimizing social desirability bias (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The questionnaires will ask participants about their experiences with emotional interference, their exposure to emotional awareness or regulation strategies in training, and their perceptions of what types of support are most effective. These results will complement the qualitative data and enhance the reliability of the findings through triangulation (Denzin, 2012).

To further investigate how specific interventions may support students, I will offer a series of sample lessons incorporating calming or grounding techniques, followed by structured participant feedback. Student reflections will be collected using open-ended questionnaires designed to capture physical, emotional, and perceptual responses to the interventions, in line with phenomenological research traditions (Smith et al., 2009).

This project will follow a structured timeline (see Figure 1). The literature review and methodology development will take place between November 2024 and March 2025. Data collection (comprising questionnaires, interviews, and sample lessons) will occur from February to April 2025. Data analysis and thematic coding will be completed between April and May 2025, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. The writing phase, including the final report and development of an accompanying pedagogical resource, will take place from June to August 2025.

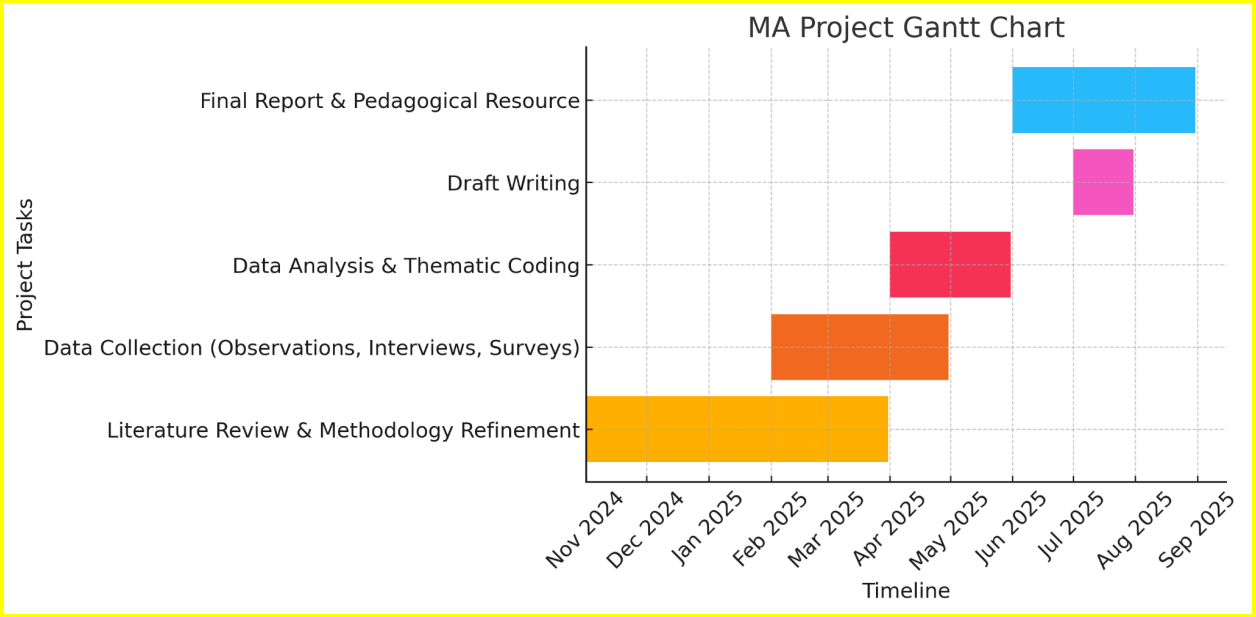


Figure 1: Gantt chart illustrating the proposed project timeline

This chart presents the timeline for the Module 6 project and accompanying paper. The vertical axis (Y-axis) lists the key project tasks, while the horizontal axis (X-axis) indicates the proposed timeframe for completing each task.

Expected Learning Outcomes

Through this project I hope to deepen my understanding of how emotional states shape singing. I have experienced how emotional interference affects my voice, and I've seen signs of similar patterns in students. I've also questioned how best to respond while staying within ethical and pedagogical bounds.

I hope this research will sharpen my awareness of those teaching moments, what they reveal about the voice, the body, and the learning environment. I aim to identify simple, non-harmful strategies that teachers without therapeutic credentials can use confidently. In doing so, I expect to become more reflective in my teaching and more curious about how I interpret vocal challenges.

Beyond the technical, I anticipate growing from the conversations this project invites, hearing from colleagues and students about what helps, what doesn't, and what's still missing. These insights will push me to approach my work with even greater humility, responsiveness, and care.

Ethics and Insider Research

This research adheres to University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) ethical standards. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained within the survey responses, and interview participants will be offered the option to either be identified or anonymous. All data will be stored securely. Participants may withdraw at any time, and their data will be erased upon request.

Given the sensitivity of emotional topics, participants will be advised not to disclose deeply personal or traumatic content. This study is not a form of therapy, it is an exploration of how affect impacts singing.

As an insider researcher (a teacher studying my own profession), I know that I bring my own perspective into the analysis. In line with Finlay (2002), I will use reflexivity to be open about how my experiences shape interpretation, so that readers can see how participant perspectives and my own insights come together in the findings.

Conclusion

This project explores how singers, teachers, and humans navigate the emotional terrain of artistry. By bridging scientific research, pedagogy, and lived experience, I hope to better understand how emotional interference is handled in studios, and how it might be addressed more clearly, ethically, and compassionately.

This work is driven by personal conviction and professional curiosity. I believe that emotional awareness in voice instruction does not require therapeutic training, but rather a willingness to observe, reflect, and respond with care. Ultimately, this research is about honoring the full humanity of singers and expanding what it means to teach voice in a way that is both technically rigorous and emotionally responsive.

Project Report

Introduction

Singing is a complex, deeply embodied act that demands coordination between physiological and psychological processes (Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017). Yet many singers, including myself, have experienced emotional interference that disrupted this balance, manifesting physically as muscle tension, restricted breathing, and reduced vocal freedom. Research by Kenny (2011), Barlow (2002), and Davidson (2017) has highlighted how emotional states influence vocal function, but much of traditional vocal pedagogy has continued to prioritize technical skill without fully addressing the emotional realities that shape artistic expression (Helding, 2020).

Often, emotional challenges in music have been framed through the lens of performance anxiety (Nagel, 1987; Wilson and Roland, 2002). However, I believe this narrow focus overlooks the broader and more embodied concept of affect, defined by Gill (2016) as pre-cognitive, physical responses that shape experience; that is, bodily reactions that occur before conscious thought or reasoning and influence perception and action even before individuals are fully aware of them.

In singing, affective states play a critical role in breath control, muscle engagement, and tone production (Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017). As both a performer and a voice teacher, I have witnessed how unresolved emotional interference affected students' confidence, technique, and willingness to take expressive risks. While some singers receive support in navigating these experiences, others manage them in isolation, often with significant consequences for their development and self-esteem (Carey and Grant, 2015; Helding, 2020; Klickstein, 2009). Struggling with emotional challenges in isolation can lead singers to interpret common difficulties as personal inadequacies, increasing self-criticism and

reducing confidence, while ongoing technical setbacks rooted in unaddressed emotional interference can further undermine self-esteem and hinder artistic development (Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017; Carey and Grant, 2015).

This study is both a personal and pedagogical inquiry into how emotional interference has been addressed in the voice studio and what tools or approaches best support students. I investigated the extent to which voice instructors were aware of affective disruptions in their students and how they responded within their professional scope. I was particularly interested in identifying strategies that were non-invasive, non-harmful, and accessible to teachers who do not hold secondary certifications in therapeutic or somatic practices such as Feldenkrais (Feldenkrais, 1972), Alexander Technique (Gelb, 2013), or psychology-based methods. Rather than suggesting that teachers become therapists, I aimed to understand how they could ethically and effectively engage with students' emotional experiences while maintaining clear professional boundaries.

I used a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Anonymous online questionnaires were conducted first to expand the reach of the project and to gather candid reflections on emotional challenges and instructional responses, while reducing social desirability bias (Denzin, 2012). Social desirability bias refers to the tendency for participants to respond in ways they believe will be viewed favorably rather than providing fully candid answers (Grimm, 2010). Findings from these questionnaires helped shape the focus and selection of subsequent semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students, which offered deeper insight into how emotional interference was perceived and managed in different learning environments (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015; Carey and Grant, 2015). I then analyzed the data thematically to identify common patterns across these varied sources, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) systematic approach to inductive thematic analysis.

The intended impact of this project was twofold. First, I sought to contribute to a more holistic model of vocal pedagogy, one that recognizes the role of affect as intrinsic rather than peripheral to the singing process (Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017). Second, the finding might inform the development of a potential resource or framework to guide instructors in addressing emotional interference with clarity, compassion, and pedagogical responsibility (Klickstein, 2009). Where effective strategies were already in use, this resource could offer

a way to share and validate those practices; where gaps were revealed, it could point toward areas for further training or collaboration with allied fields (Carey and Grant, 2015).

Additionally, I found that while there is a substantial body of research on the interplay between affect and singing, this information often does not reach many practitioners, highlighting the need for more effective dissemination and translation of research into accessible, practical tools for teachers and singers (Green, 2008).The challenge of research failing to reach practitioners is not unique to vocal pedagogy. Educational theorists have long observed that much academic research remains within scholarly circles and does not effectively translate into everyday teaching practice (Hargreaves, 1996). Researchers in healthcare have noted that important findings often remain in academic settings and fail to inform everyday practice (Lomas, 1993; Graham et al., 2006). This highlights the broader need for research on emotion and vocal pedagogy to be both accessible and applicable for teachers and singers in real-world contexts.

Through this work, I gained a more nuanced understanding of how emotional and affective states shaped the experience of singing for both students and teachers (Helding, 2020). I strengthened my capacity for reflexivity by critically examining my own assumptions and teaching practices, aligning with the practice of ongoing self-examination advocated in qualitative research (Finlay, 2002). I also found that connecting with other teachers and students through this research deepened my empathy and expanded my perspective, ultimately helping me grow as a more thoughtful, ethical, and responsive educator (Patton, 2015).

At its heart, this project was about reclaiming space in vocal pedagogy for the full humanity of singers. It asked how we, as artist-educators, might honor both the technical and emotional dimensions of voice without overreaching or retreating (Helding, 2020). I came to believe that doing so begins not with rigid formulas, but with curiosity, humility, and a deep respect for the inner lives of those who sing.

Literature Review

This literature review examines how emotional experience intersects with voice pedagogy and teacher practice, focusing on emotional interference in singing. Grounded in arts-based

and practice-led research (Nelson, 2013; Leavy, 2020), it explores how affective states influence vocal performance, how teachers respond, and what tools exist to support students ethically.

Definition of Key Terms

Affect is defined as a pre-conscious, embodied response (Gill, 2016), encompassing somatic reactions like tension or breath restriction, distinct from named emotions. Emotional labeling refers to the conscious process of identifying and interpreting these sensations (Barrett, 2017).

Emotional interference describes the impact of emotional states such as anxiety, grief, or perfectionism on vocal and learning functions (Helding, 2020; Kenny, 2011), often seen as physical tension or behavioral shutdown (Welch, 2015; Carey and Grant, 2015).

Voice pedagogy refers to methods and philosophies for teaching singing, traditionally focused on technical skills but increasingly recognizing psychological and somatic dimensions (Miller, 1996; Helding, 2020). Emotionally attuned teaching acknowledges students' emotional states and employs non-therapeutic strategies such as grounding or trauma-informed communication (Carey and Grant, 2015; Klickstein, 2009).

The literature reviewed spans voice pedagogy, psychology, somatics, and arts-based research, with inclusion criteria emphasizing emotional, embodied, and ethical aspects of voice instruction. Relevant studies from sport, medicine, and human psychology were also included where they offered insight into affective states, physiology, and performance. In searching, I drew on key terms such as *emotional interference in singing, trauma and the body, affect and physiology, voice pedagogy, singer well-being,* and names of specific modalities including *Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique,* and *body mapping,* which produced particularly strong results given their prominence in current discourse on alignment and embodied learning. I also included broader anatomical and physiological texts and literature on somatic and psychological regulation strategies. In terms of timeframe, I prioritised recent publications in voice science, psychology, and behavioural studies due to rapid developments in these areas, while also drawing on historical and methodological sources where approaches remain influential or unchanged. The goal is to illuminate current shifts in

pedagogical models and support the development of emotionally responsive practices grounded in ethical care.

Historical and Pedagogical Context

Classical voice pedagogy traditionally emphasizes technical control over breath, diction, and resonance within a master-apprentice model and the Western canon (Miller, 1996; Stark, 2003). Within this paradigm emotional neutrality is often expected, with performance expression valued, but not emotional states as learning conditions (Welch et al., 2014; Helding, 2020). Conservatory training historically de-emphasized student-centered or emotionally responsive methods (Carey et al., 2018). Voice lessons focused on skill and repertoire often overlook psychological factors affecting performance.

Contemporary pedagogy reflects growing recognition of emotional and neurological influences on learning (Helding, 2020). Advances in neuroscience and trauma research highlight the need for teacher awareness of affective responses and their impact on vocal function (Welch, 2017; Kenny, 2011). The voice studio landscape has also diversified. Many teachers now engage with students of varying identities, backgrounds, and emotional needs (Welch et al., 2019; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). The inclusion of commercial and musical theatre styles has expanded the teacher's role beyond classical norms (Hoch and Sandage, 2019). Post-COVID realities further spotlighted student vulnerability, prompting increased dialogue around trauma-informed pedagogy (Williamon et al., 2021; Spiro et al., 2021). Yet, most teachers lack formal training to address emotional interference ethically and effectively (Carey and Grant, 2015; Helding, 2020).

Recent scholarship shows voice pedagogy is undergoing a shift toward more holistic, socially responsive models (Chapman, 2011), yet this transformation remains fragmented. Keskinen et al. (2024) demonstrate that while individual voice teachers are expanding professionalism through holistic practices, institutional frameworks to support this evolution are largely lacking. Ragan's (2018) evidence-based model (integrating three pillars: scientific voice research, the teacher's professional expertise, and the student's individual needs and values.) outlines what such an integrated framework could look like, but its adoption remains inconsistent. Cox (2024) further emphasizes the persistent dominance of traditional models, revealing structural resistance to change.The current challenge lies in

navigating the tension between expanding pedagogical responsibilities and maintaining ethical boundaries. Voice teachers are increasingly expected to respond to emotional realities, yet remain uncertain about how to do so within their professional scope (Kenny, 2011; Carey and Grant, 2015).

Affective States, Emotional Interference, and the Voice

Affective experience plays a central role in vocal performance. Unlike cognitively labeled emotions such as fear, joy, or sadness, which are consciously identified and named (Barrett, 2017), affect refers to physiological responses that often arise before awareness, manifesting as muscular tension, shallow breathing, or vocal constriction (Gill, 2016; Damasio, 2000; Van den Bogert et al., 2021). In singing, such somatic symptoms directly affect phonation, resonance, and vocal efficiency (Welch, 2017; Van den Bogert et al., 2021).

Research confirms that emotional states like anxiety and stress activate the sympathetic nervous system, leading to physical changes that interfere with vocal freedom (Barlow, 2002; Sapolsky, 2004; Kenny, 2011; Helding, 2020). These responses are not simply psychological, they are embodied and affect the breath, posture, and voice (Barrett, 2017; Helding, 2020). Helding (2020) argues that such physiological interference cannot be overcome through cognitive strategies alone. Teachers must be able to recognize when a student's voice is impacted by emotional states and adjust their teaching accordingly (LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). Yet many teachers treat these symptoms as outside the lesson's scope, fearing encroachment into therapeutic territory (Carey and Grant, 2015; Kenny, 2011).

This avoidance is not due to apathy but often reflects a lack of training or confidence (Haddon and Burnard, 2016). As Carey and Grant (2015) note, teachers may sense emotional tension but lack language or tools to address it. Emotional interference includes not just physical issues (e.g., jaw tension) but also behavioral (e.g., freezing, shutting down) and psychological responses (e.g., fear of judgment) (Helding, 2020; Kenny, 2011).

Students often misinterpret emotional blocks as technical failure, especially younger learners who may lack self-awareness or vocabulary to understand their reactions (Barrett, 2017; Carey and Grant, 2015). Kenny (2011) stresses that not all emotional interference

stems from clinical pathology, subtle stressors and perfectionism can likewise hinder vocal potential.

Quinlan (2021) argues for an educational humanities that positions emotional life not as a clinical issue, but as a relational and ethical concern integrated into teaching, supporting the shift toward more holistic, pupil-centred pedagogies. Teachers can support regulation and learning without becoming therapists (Helding, 2020; Klickstein, 2009; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). Understanding the embodied nature of affective states is key to supporting students in accessing both technical and expressive dimensions of voice, because singing requires a coordinated integration of the whole body, including the interplay of physical, mental, and emotional processes (Juntunen et al., 2023).

The following section explores how teachers perceive and navigate their role in addressing these emotional dynamics, highlighting both ethical concerns and emerging practices.

The Role of the Voice Teacher: Boundaries, Responsibility, and Support

Voice teachers often develop close, long-term relationships with students, which makes the studio a uniquely intimate and emotionally vulnerable space (Kenny, 2011; Juntunen et al., 2023; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). This raises the question: to what extent should teachers address students' emotional needs?

Fletcher, Davidson and Krause (2024) found that teachers are often aware of students' emotional struggles but unsure how to respond. Some fear causing harm or being mistaken for therapists; others avoid emotional conversations altogether (Helding, 2020; Carey and Grant, 2015). Yet ignoring these dynamics can also be damaging and invalidate the student's experience or reinforce shame (Carey and Grant, 2015; Fletcher, Davidson and Krause, 2024).

Power dynamics can complicate this further. Students may view teachers as mentors or parental figures, especially in sustained private instruction (Carey and Grant, 2015). Stige et al. (2009) caution that educators must navigate power, consent, and safety, ensuring that emotional engagement is always student-led. Some pedagogues, like Ristad (1982) and Nagel (1987), have long supported holistic approaches, but others warn against overstepping professional boundaries (Helding, 2020; Kenny, 2011). The issue is not

whether emotion belongs in the studio, but how to ethically respond when it appears (Carey and Grant, 2015).

Some teachers have adopted responsive but bounded practices, such as breath grounding, naming emotional shifts, or offering space without pushing for resolution (Klickstein, 2009; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020). These don't require therapeutic credentials but do require sensitivity, presence, and ethical clarity (Helding, 2020).

Creswell and Poth (2018) advocate for staying grounded in one's paradigm and scope. While voice teachers are not mental health professionals, their feedback and presence can strongly affect students' sense of safety (Kenny, 2011; Carey and Grant, 2015). Students may interpret neutral corrections as harsh or supportive comments as pressure, depending on past experiences and attachment patterns (Helding, 2020).

The goal is not to eliminate emotion from lessons, but to engage with it constructively (Chapman, 2011). Teachers can foster co-regulation, normalize vulnerability, and maintain firm boundaries, all while honoring the student's humanity and growth (Carey and Grant, 2015; Helding, 2020; LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2020).

This section establishes the ethical importance of emotionally responsive voice teaching. Next, we turn to literature on somatic and trauma-informed practices that offer practical strategies to support this work.

Somatic and Trauma-Informed Approaches in Voice Pedagogy

Somatic and trauma-informed practices are increasingly influential in voice pedagogy. These approaches regard the body not just as a technical instrument but as an expressive, perceptive system shaped by emotional and physiological experience. For singers, whose medium is the body itself, this has direct implications for teaching. *"Freeing the natural voice is as much about removing emotional and psychological blocks as it is about releasing physical tension. The voice is tied to the deepest layers of the self; when it is blocked, so too is emotional truth."* (Linklater, 2006, p. xxviii)

Somatic methods such as the Alexander Technique (Gelb, 2013), Feldenkrais Method (Connors, 2014), and Body Mapping (Conable and Conable, 2000) enhance physical

awareness and reduce tension. While not explicitly therapeutic, they often release affective blockages by addressing chronic muscular patterns rooted in emotional states (Helding, 2020; Kimmel, 2003).

However, teachers without formal training in these modalities may hesitate to apply them confidently (Klickstein, 2009; Carey and Grant, 2015). This hesitation reflects not only a lack of technical knowledge but also ethical considerations. Teachers have a duty of care to work within the scope of their competence and to avoid causing harm, while also respecting the boundaries between pedagogy and therapy (Carey and Grant, 2015; Allsup and Westerlund, 2012). Applying somatic or therapeutic methods without training risks misrepresentation and the blurring of professional roles (Silverman, 2012), potentially exposing students to unintended harm. Ethical practice therefore requires transparency about one's qualifications and, where necessary, referral to trained practitioners (McCartney, 2016; Regelski, 2012).

Helding (2020) advocates for greater somatic and neurological literacy among music educators. She emphasizes that understanding how stress and trauma affect motor control and memory is essential for effective vocal instruction. This knowledge should not be viewed as supplemental but as core to ethical, sustainable pedagogy.

Yet, Leavy (2020) cautions that the boundary between expressive work and therapeutic process must be respected. Singing can evoke strong emotions, but lessons are not meant to resolve trauma. Teachers can support regulation and agency without overstepping into clinical territory. Trauma-informed pedagogy, while rooted in social work and psychology (Carello and Butler, 2015), has gained traction in arts education, especially post-pandemic (Imad, 2021; Spiro et al., 2021). It centers on creating emotionally safe, predictable environments that promote student agency, reduce re-traumatization, and encourage self-regulation (Chafouleas et al., 2016). Carey and Grant (2015) emphasize the importance of clear expectations and student autonomy, while Helding (2020) highlights the role of breath and movement as effective strategies for re-grounding. Together, these approaches translate to practical studio methods that foster rapport and reduce emotional shutdowns.

Despite growing awareness, access to trauma-informed content remains inconsistent (Haddon and Burnard, 2016). Many training programs do not formally address emotional

regulation or nervous system literacy (Carey and Grant, 2015; Helding, 2020). Teachers must often pursue this education independently or not at all. Some feel uncertain about using non-technical strategies without certification (Klickstein, 2009; Helding, 2020), while others fear compromising technical rigor (Kenny, 2011).

This highlights the need for simple, adaptable tools that support emotionally aware teaching within scope of practice (Carello and Butler, 2015; Imad, 2021b). This study aims to meet that need, not by training teachers as therapists, but by offering grounded practices like breath resets, choice-based prompts, and neutral naming of emotional shifts. These small changes can significantly increase lesson safety and efficacy (Helding, 2020; Klickstein, 2009).

The next section explores how reflective practice can help teachers make ethical, informed decisions about when and how to apply such tools in emotionally complex situations.

Reflective Practice and Ethical Considerations in Emotionally Sensitive Teaching

Reflective practice is a key tool for voice teachers navigating emotional dynamics in the studio (Schön, 1983; Finlay, 2008). It allows educators to examine their reactions, biases, and pedagogical decisions, especially when working with vulnerable or emotionally charged content (Carey and Grant, 2015; Haddon, 2016).

Carey et al. (2018) frame the studio as a dialogic, responsive space. Teachers function not only as experts but as learners, adjusting in real time based on student needs. In emotionally sensitive moments, this reflexivity is critical. Teachers must distinguish a student's emotional state from their own and avoid reacting from personal triggers.

In arts-based practice, the teacher's identity is always present (Leavy, 2020). Teaching voice is not fully objective, it involves embodied intuition, relational energy, and past experience. Acknowledging this enhances professional integrity rather than diminishing authority.

Nelson (2013) stresses the importance of positionality in practitioner research. Teachers should reflect on what training, assumptions, and blind spots they bring to emotional situations. Creswell and Poth (2018) similarly advocate transparency about scope of

practice, which includes clarifying that voice teachers are not therapists, even when supporting emotional regulation. Stige et al. (2009) underscore the ethical need for consent and safety in emotionally vulnerable work. For example, students with trauma histories may present as withdrawn or resistant unless met with compassion and curiosity (Carello and Butler, 2015; Helding, 2020).

Reflection also helps teachers maintain boundaries and prevent burnout, a psychological syndrome defined by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of accomplishment, which arises as a response to prolonged occupational stress (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). Structured self-inquiry, through journaling, supervision, or peer dialogue, supports sustained, emotionally intelligent teaching (Finlay, 2008; Haddon, 2016).

Gaps Between Theory and Practice

A consistent theme in the literature is the gap between theory and practice in addressing emotional interference in singing. Although robust models for emotionally attuned, trauma-informed, and somatic teaching exist, their implementation is inconsistent. Carey and Grant (2015) highlight that many teachers lack formal training in holistic or student-centred pedagogies, which contributes to uneven adoption. Helding (2020) further observes that longstanding traditions in music education often privilege technical achievement over emotional or embodied dimensions, limiting the uptake of newer approaches. Glaza (2021) notes that trauma-informed practices have been proposed for private studios but are not yet widely adopted.

Barriers include limited access to academic research (Leavy, 2020), lack of training in pedagogical programs (Helding, 2020), and discomfort using techniques perceived as therapeutic without certification (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Fletcher, Davidson and Krause (2024) found that while teachers want to support students emotionally, many are unsure what is appropriate or safe.

Some educators worry that focusing on emotion undermines technical rigor (Carey et al., 2018; Nelson, 2013), though this view is challenged by scholars like Helding (2020) and Davidson (2017), who argue that emotional and cognitive awareness enhance technique by improving physiological coordination, supporting self-regulation, and integrating expressive intention with technical control.

Another problem is integration and dissemination of information. Teachers recognize the emotional dimensions of singing but lack shared frameworks for ethical, confident response (Stige et al., 2009; Kenny, 2011). This project builds on that insight, exploring why these tools remain underused despite their availability.

Summary

This literature review reveals a profession in transition. Voice teachers increasingly recognize that emotional and affective states shape vocal performance, yet many lack clear, ethical frameworks for addressing these realities in the studio (Helding, 2020; Carey and Grant, 2015; Kenny, 2011). From foundational arts-based research (Leavy, 2020; Nelson, 2013) to practical models in somatics and trauma-informed pedagogy (Stige et al., 2009), tools exist, but may be unevenly applied.

Teachers are uniquely positioned to support student regulation without becoming therapists, but it seems like the field lacks unified, accessible guidance on how to do so. This study responds to that need, not by creating new therapies, but by investigating how existing knowledge can be meaningfully integrated into voice teaching.

The review establishes emotional interference as a pedagogical concern, defines its embodied nature, traces historical and current pedagogical models, and highlights the gap between available strategies and their use. The project that follows builds on this foundation to offer practical, research-informed, and ethically grounded tools for emotionally intelligent teaching.

Methodological Paradigm and Framework

I adopted a constructivist, interpretivist paradigm (Creswell and Poth, 2018) because the emotional aspects of vocal pedagogy require an approach that values lived experience, reflective meaning-making, and the relational dynamics between teacher and student. Within this paradigm, knowledge is understood to be co-constructed and context-dependent (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Voice instruction is not simply the transmission of technical skill; it is a dynamic, embodied, and interpersonal process shaped by trust, dialogue, and affective states (Haddon and Burnard, 2016). A constructivist framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how pedagogical and emotional realities intersect in the singing

studio, honoring the individuality and complexity of each participant's experience (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Haddon and Burnard, 2016; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Given this orientation, I selected a qualitative research design, as the emotional dimensions of singing and teaching cannot be meaningfully captured through purely quantitative measures. My aim was to explore the layered, subjective experiences of teachers and students as they navigate emotional interference in singing. As Carey and Grant (2015) note, one-to-one music pedagogy is deeply relational and shaped by each teacher's philosophical and personal stance. Similarly, Haddon and Burnard (2016) argue that practitioner inquiry is essential for revealing the contextual and emotional dimensions of music education. Qualitative methods are therefore well suited to investigate how emotional well-being is addressed (or not) in studio practice.

To gain a rich and multi-dimensional understanding of the topic, I adopted a multi-method qualitative approach. I used anonymous questionnaires to gain broad insight into participant experiences while protecting privacy and reducing social desirability bias (Creswell and Poth, 2018). These responses were complemented by semi-structured interviews, which allowed me to explore the "how" and "why" behind teachers' strategies and students' reflections in greater depth (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2018). The teachers and professionals I interviewed requested to be identified by name, expressing excitement at the opportunity to contribute. They viewed participation in this project as a way to share their expertise and the wisdom cultivated through years of teaching and professional practice. In line with ethical research practice, participants were offered the option of anonymity; however, all chose attribution, preferring their perspectives to be recognized and credited rather than anonymised. I also conducted trial lessons, applying selected strategies in real-time and gathering student feedback to explore the embodied effects of various approaches (McNiff, 2013; Burnard, 2006). Student responses were anonymised to ensure confidentiality. This triangulation of methods (Denzin, 1978; Flick, 2022) supported a layered understanding of the emotional and pedagogical dynamics at play and lead to a greater reliability and validity of findings.

To analyze the data, I employed reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which aligns with my constructivist perspective. This method supports an iterative, interpretive process that allows themes to emerge from the data while maintaining researcher reflexivity.

As an insider researcher, I remained aware of my own influence on the research process and interpretation (Finlay, 2008), drawing on my experience without allowing it to override the voices of participants. This approach also aligns with Helding's (2020) call to bridge research and practice in voice pedagogy by centering the lived experiences of those directly engaged in teaching and learning.

Methods and Procedures

Anonymous Questionnaires: Accessing Breadth, Honesty, and Breadth of Practice

To gather diverse perspectives from students and voice instructors, I created an anonymous Google Forms questionnaire (see Appendix D) with multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The items were informed by themes from the literature, focusing on emotional interference, pedagogical strategies, and teacher-student dynamics. A brief pilot with two colleagues ensured clarity. The final questionnaire was distributed through professional networks, including the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), academic contacts, and social media groups for voice teachers. This approach aligns with Creswell and Poth's (2018) guidance on expanding qualitative participation. Anonymity was emphasized to encourage honest responses on a sensitive topic, reflecting trauma-informed research practices outlined by Carello and Butler (2015).

This survey method yielded 30 completed responses from teachers working across a range of contexts including private studios, academic institutions, community programs, and professional training settings (See Appendix E). Participants reported teaching students of varying ages (children through adults), experience levels (beginner to advanced), and in diverse vocal genres such as classical, musical theatre, jazz, and contemporary commercial music. The value of using questionnaires in qualitative inquiry to access a wide breadth of practice perspectives is supported by Flick (2023), who highlights that such methods can reveal field-wide patterns while preserving individual nuance. Additionally, several participants reported that the act of completing the questionnaire prompted reflection on their own teaching practices, aligning with the project's aim of fostering practitioner self-awareness and field-wide dialogue, as encouraged by Schön (1983) in his discussion of reflective practice in professional contexts.

Coding: Making Meaning from the Questionnaire Data

Once the questionnaire data was collected, I engaged in qualitative coding methods (see Appendix E) informed by thematic analysis to analyze the data systematically (Charmaz, 2006). I began with an initial immersive read-through of all responses to gain an intuitive sense of tone, recurring themes, and the emotional undercurrents expressed by participants, reflecting the importance of becoming sensitized to the data as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Following this, I applied first-cycle descriptive codes to significant segments of the responses, using concise labels to capture recurring ideas, consistent with the coding practices outlined by Saldaña (2016). This approach allowed me to identify patterns related to breath and body-based interventions, teacher commitment to care while maintaining boundaries, the desire for training and resources, adaptations in technical instruction in response to student emotional states, and the emotional burdens experienced by teachers within the studio. The iterative nature of this coding process aligns with the reflexive thematic analysis approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006), emphasizing flexibility while maintaining analytic rigor.

Quantitative Data Handling

In addition to qualitative coding, I used JAMOVI software ((jamovi, no date)) to generate descriptive and exploratory statistical analyses on the questionnaire dataset. This included calculating frequencies and Pearson correlation coefficients (statistics that measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between two variables) to explore potential associations between factors such as years of teaching experience, genre specialization, level of formal training, and engagement with emotionally responsive strategies (see Appendix F). These analyses were strictly exploratory; they were not used to test hypotheses but rather to identify patterns that could inform and sharpen the focus for subsequent qualitative analysis and interpretation.

For example, I explored whether younger or older teachers were more likely to prioritize emotion-informed pedagogy, whether more experienced teachers reported using emotional support tools more frequently, and whether specific musical genres (e.g., classical vs. CCM)

or levels of formal education correlated with greater awareness of emotional interference in singing (see Appendix F).

Interviews: Deepening the Dialogue

Following the survey analysis, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten participants (see Appendices G-I) using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in experience, modality, and professional background, a method aligned with qualitative best practices as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015). All interview participants opted to be identified by name, expressing enthusiasm about contributing their perspectives to a developing field and a sense of pride in lending their voices to work they viewed as meaningful for the broader teaching community. The participant group consisted of five voice teachers, each of whom held additional training in a modality such as Feldenkrais (Feldenkrais, 1972), hypnotherapy, Alexander Technique (Gelb, 2013), somatic psychology, etc… These teachers worked with a wide range of students across age groups and skill levels, from beginners to advanced singers, offering perspectives grounded in practical, lived studio experiences (Carey and Grant, 2015).

In addition, I interviewed four interdisciplinary professionals (see Appendix I) who are active singers but whose primary vocations lie in other fields, including a chiropractor and yoga teacher, a trauma therapist, a Jin Shin Jyutsu (Burmeister, 1980) practitioner, and an acting coach/director with a background in writing and performance. Each of these participants brought unique perspectives on the relationship between body, voice, and emotional health, aligning with Helding's (2020) call for integrating cross-disciplinary knowledge within voice teaching practices. The final participant was an instrumental musician and conductor who also lectures and leads workshops on mindfulness as a foundational tool for musical practice, contributing insights on how mindfulness practices intersect with emotional regulation in performance contexts (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

These interviews offered depth beyond the survey findings, allowing me to explore the "how" and "why" behind the strategies teachers and practitioners used in their work, a key strength of interviews in qualitative research noted by Creswell and Poth (2018). The conversations provided opportunities to examine the decision-making processes teachers engaged in when navigating emotionally charged moments, supporting exploration of the

complex relational dynamics present in the singing studio (Haddon and Burnard, 2016). Additionally, I designed the interviews to foster mutual reflection, transforming the research encounter into a co-constructed space for meaning-making, consistent with the relational and dialogic nature of qualitative interviewing described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015).

The interview guide was developed based on themes that emerged from the literature review and questionnaire responses, ensuring alignment with the central research questions of the study. I designed questions to explore areas such as professional context, philosophical orientation toward emotional well-being in singing, current practices, influences, success stories, challenges, and perceived needs for further support. This approach was informed by recommendations for semi-structured interviews that allow systematic yet flexible data collection (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The questions aimed to probe both practical experiences and underlying beliefs, helping to uncover how teachers navigate emotional complexity in their pedagogy. The resulting qualitative data offered nuanced insights while also identifying gaps in knowledge, confidence, and community validation (Carey and Grant, 2015; Helding, 2020). The questionnaire data showed strong thematic recurrence, with key challenges such as anxiety, performance pressure, trauma-related responses, and the need for empathetic support consistently reported across participants. This suggests that a degree of data saturation was achieved, understood as the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), as few new codes emerged in later responses.

Trial Lessons: Testing Strategies in Real Time

To bridge the findings with practical application, I designed and conducted a phase of trial lessons with student volunteers, aligning with practice-based research principles that emphasize testing and observing interventions in authentic learning contexts to refine practice (McNiff, 2013). I invited students over the age of 18 from my studio to participate in a series of three complimentary lessons, explicitly framed as exploratory sessions to examine the feasibility and perceived usefulness of emotionally attuned teaching practices identified through the survey and interview phases of this research (see Appendices K-O).

Drawing from the literature and practitioner insights, I designed three themed lessons (see Appendix M) around modalities that teachers could employ safely without requiring

extensive additional training. Lesson one focused on Feldenkrais-informed body awareness, emphasizing gentle movement and exploratory sensing, aligning with somatic learning principles outlined by Buchanan and Ulrich (2001). Lesson two centered on mindfulness-informed singing, incorporating breath-based grounding and present-moment awareness strategies in line with the work of Kabat-Zinn (2005) and Imad (2021a). Lesson three explored body mapping practices rooted in Alexander Technique principles, encouraging students to refine their awareness of balance, alignment, and ease, as discussed by Conable (2000).

Students provided both verbal and written feedback on each lesson (see Appendix O). The written component was a brief questionnaire with open-ended prompts such as “How did this activity affect your singing today?” and “What did you notice in your body, breath, or emotions?” (see Appendix N). They typically wrote a few sentences, and also gave one to three minutes of verbal reflection at the end of each session. Open-ended prompts were chosen to capture experiential, embodied, and reflective responses, consistent with qualitative approaches that privilege participants’ own words (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This feedback was used to evaluate the accessibility and perceived usefulness of each approach.

Ethics and Insider Research Considerations

As an insider researcher, a voice teacher researching within my own professional field, reflexivity was central to maintaining ethical rigor throughout this project (Finlay, 2008). I kept a reflexive journal to document assumptions, emotional responses, and shifts in perspective during the research process, supporting transparency and critical self-awareness (Finlay, 2008).

Ethical procedures were carefully implemented, including the use of informed consent protocols (see Appendices C,G, and K) with clear explanations of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage, ensuring that participants felt respected and empowered in the process (Creswell and Poth, 2018). I ensured the anonymization of participant data and the secure storage of all materials, maintaining confidentiality and protecting participants’ identities (British Psychological Society, 2021). Given the potential for emotionally sensitive discussions within this topic area, I encouraged participants to

avoid sharing deeply personal or traumatic experiences that might exceed the scope of a pedagogical research context, maintaining clarity that this project was framed as pedagogical inquiry rather than therapy (Carello and Butler, 2015; Helding, 2020).

The project aligned with trauma-informed research practices outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2014), emphasizing safety, choice, transparency, and emotional empowerment throughout the research process. By centering these principles, I aimed to create a research environment that modeled the values of emotionally attuned and ethically bounded teaching practices I sought to explore in the study itself.

Reflexive Journaling and Insider Research

Throughout the analysis, I maintained a reflexive journal to document my assumptions, emotional reactions, and moments of resonance with the data, ensuring transparency in the interpretive process (Finlay, 2008). The journal was not analysed as data in itself but functioned as a supportive tool, helping me track the evolution of my interpretations and remain alert to potential bias. For example, journal entries often prompted me to revisit codes to check whether they reflected participants' voices rather than my own assumptions. This practice of reflexivity was particularly important given my position as an insider researcher within the voice teaching community, allowing me to acknowledge and bracket my own experiences while maintaining analytic integrity (Helding, 2020).

This study's methodology was carefully chosen to align with its aim: exploring how emotional well-being intersects with vocal pedagogy in ethical and practical ways. These findings aim to inform sustainable, responsive, and ethically grounded pedagogical practice in contemporary vocal instruction (Helding, 2020; Kenny, 2011).
The following section presents the key findings that emerged from the questionnaires, interviews, and trial lessons, highlighting current attitudes, challenges, and approaches to emotional support within the voice studio.

Findings

This section presents the key findings that emerged from all phases of the study including the literature review, questionnaires, interviews, and trial lesson reflections. The following themes are introduced with a brief overview, then explored in depth to illustrate how the data shaped each conclusion and how these insights may inform future pedagogical practice.

1. **Emotional interference impacts physiological coordination in singing.**

Strong emotional states can disrupt key physical mechanisms involved in singing such as breath flow, muscular coordination, and vocal freedom (Kenny, 2011; Helding, 2020; Davidson, 2017). This finding raises a pedagogical concern: how can students effectively learn technical skills if their bodies are not cooperating due to emotional strain? Embodied awareness and emotional regulation are known to be prerequisites for effective skill acquisition in vocal learning, as emotional dysregulation can interfere with motor control and timing (van der Merwe and Habron, 2015; Bengtsson et al., 2007). Furthermore, it suggests that teachers may sometimes misattribute a student's difficulty with vocal execution to a lack of technical understanding, rather than recognizing the presence of emotional interference (Helding, 2020; Carey and Grant, 2014).

2. **Students struggle and need emotional support.**

Students regularly bring emotional challenges into the voice studio, ranging from stress and transition to trauma-related distress (Bonanno, 2004; Fang et al., 2020). Global and societal disruptions such as COVID-19 and climate anxiety have amplified these struggles (Son et al., 2020; Quirico, 2023). This was echoed in my questionnaire, where all student participants reported emotional issues affecting their singing (see Appendix E).

3. **Effective teachers are actively seeking and applying supportive strategies.**

Research shows that many teachers are adapting pedagogy to meet students' emotional needs, using empathic and flexible strategies (Fletcher, Davidson and Krause, 2024). My

survey and interviews confirmed this trend: teachers described using breath work, imagery, grounding, and movement, and expressed a strong desire to be more emotionally responsive (see Appendices E–I). These findings highlight a broader shift toward emotion-aware teaching, consistent with general education research (Martínez, 2016).

4. **Non-therapeutic modalities can be effectively and ethically integrated into teaching.**

Teachers in my study overwhelmingly recognized that emotional challenges affect singing, and most reported experimenting with strategies such as empathetic listening, mindfulness, breath work, and movement (see Appendix E). These can be integrated safely when framed as pedagogical (not therapeutic) tools, provided teachers maintain ethical boundaries by respecting scope of practice, student consent, and emotional safety (Gross, 2015; Chafouleas et al., 2016). Both survey responses and interviews emphasized that creating safety and clarity of role is foundational: students benefit most when teachers use these approaches transparently to support regulation and learning, rather than attempting treatment (see Appendices E–I).

5. **A flexible, student-responsive approach is essential.**

Both literature and my findings show that no single strategy works for all singers, as emotional and learning responses vary widely (Gross, 2015; Coffield et al., 2004). Students in my survey rated modalities differently, and trial lesson feedback reflected diverse preferences and outcomes (see Appendices E, O). Flexibility and individualized application are therefore crucial for fostering both safety and technical progress.

6. **Access and awareness remain barriers.**

Despite the availability of effective approaches, many teachers reported in surveys and interviews that they lacked formal training in emotional strategies, often relying instead on intuition or mentorship (see Appendices E–I). Literature echoes this gap: music educators frequently feel underprepared to meet emotional needs in their teaching (Carey, Harrison and Dwyer, 2019; Conway and Hibbard, 2016). Survey data further showed that teachers with independent somatic training were more confident in supporting students emotionally,

while university-trained teachers often lacked exposure to these tools (see Appendix F). Similarly, students in sample lessons, some with advanced formal training, reported encountering such strategies for the first time (see Appendix O). Together, these findings highlight a systemic issue of dissemination rather than knowledge: relevant scholarship and practice exist, but stronger knowledge translation and integration into teacher education are needed to close the gap.

Expanded Analysis of Key Findings

The following section expands on each of the six key findings outlined above. For each theme, I present the data that contributed to the conclusion, drawing on questionnaire responses, interviews, and trial lesson reflections. Where appropriate, I also relate the findings to existing literature in voice pedagogy, psychology, and somatic education. Each finding is explored in greater depth to illustrate not only what was discovered, but how these insights may support voice teachers and students navigating emotional challenges within the learning process.

1. **Emotional interference impacts physiological coordination in singing.**

Strong emotional states can disrupt key physical mechanisms involved in singing, such as breath flow, muscular coordination, and vocal freedom (Kenny, 2011; Helding, 2020; Davidson, 2017). This finding raises an important pedagogical concern: how can students effectively learn and refine technical skills if their bodies are not cooperating due to emotional strain? Research in both music and motor learning fields suggests that emotional dysregulation can interfere with coordination, timing, and embodied control, all of which are necessary for skill acquisition and artistic consistency (van der Merwe and Habron, 2015; Bengtsson et al., 2007). Moreover, teachers may misattribute a student's vocal struggle to lack of understanding or effort, rather than recognizing emotional interference as the underlying issue (Carey and Grant, 2014; Helding, 2020).

In my anonymous questionnaire, when participants were asked whether strong emotions had ever interfered with their ability to sing, 100% responded affirmatively.

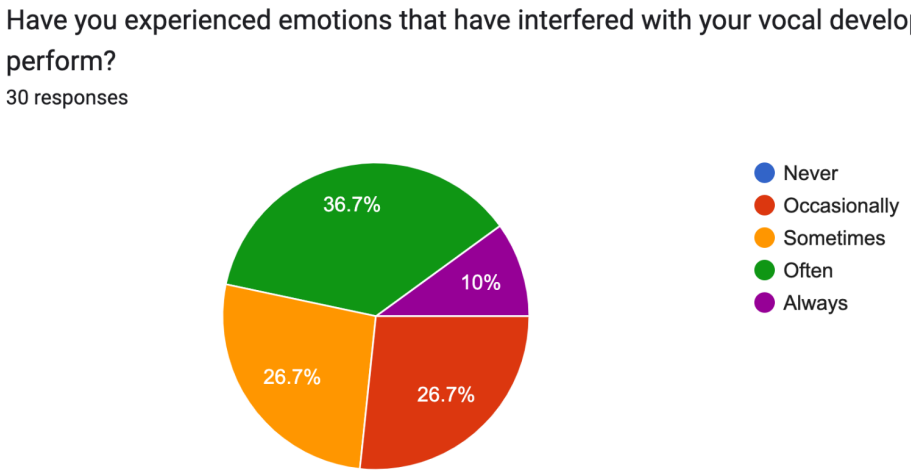


Figure 2: Responses to the question "Have you experienced emotions that have interfered with your vocal development or ability to perform?"

This pie chart presents data collected from the anonymous survey distributed to voice students and teachers. The underlying data can be found in Appendix E.

When prompted to describe how emotions affected them, the answers consistently revealed disruptions in physical function and mental focus. For instance: *"I struggle with memorization and recall, so often I feel anxiety about forgetting words in memorized performances"* (see Appendix E).

This aligns with findings from Shields (2017), who demonstrated that acute emotional stress impairs both working memory and cognitive recall. Anxiety in performance settings can heighten this effect, creating a loop of reduced recall and further stress (Schwabe and Wolf, 2010).

Several participants in the anonymous questionnaire described how emotional states directly affected their bodies during singing. They reported symptoms such as breath constriction, muscle tension, shaking, and loss of vocal control:

“Strong emotions impact breathing/breath support. That impacts my ability to relax my throat. That tension impacts my tone, particularly in the upper range.”
“Not able to take proper breaths for air. My leg would shake. Not able to sing as strong.”
“I often get shaky and a racing heart before I start singing…”
“Sadness sometimes chokes me up.”
“My chest and throat would tighten; my eyes would tear up; I would gasp involuntarily.”
“Emotions have impacted my breathing and subsequently interfered with my tone/intonation and ability to sustain long phrases… emotions have reduced the quality of my performances to a notable degree.”
(see Appendix E)

These responses are consistent with physiological research showing that emotional stress activates the sympathetic nervous system, leading to restricted breathing, increased muscle tension, and impaired vocal coordination (Kenny, 2011; Van den Bogert et al., 2021).

One respondent described a depressive period during 2022–2023: *“I went through a period of depression in 2022–2023 where I could physically sing, but I did not want to. Due to this, I didn't pursue any performance opportunities and rarely practiced”* (see Appendix E).

This reflects known clinical patterns where even temporary depressive episodes lead to pervasive fatigue and a notable loss of motivation or will to engage in previously enjoyed activities (Targum et al., 2011); common cognitive symptoms include decreased interest, slowed thinking, and impaired concentration (Steffens et al., 2022; Sekhon, 2023). In vocational or performance-based contexts, such depressive states translate into disengagement rather than inability.

In contrast, other participants shared experiences of complex PTSD and long-term emotional trauma. One respondent wrote:

“To be completely honest... What strong emotions impacted my ability to sing during lessons or performances? It would be the CPTSD from my childhood, the domestic abusive relationship I was in, along with my anxiety and clinical

depression... those scenarios at one point or another personally put my nervous system in a state of what I can best explain as a feeling of 'raw-frazzled-hypervigilance.'"
(see Appendix E)

Another participant shared:

"I do have to fight ingrained childhood and adolescence habits of wanting to jump to general dissociation when any uncomfortable singing-related situation arises. And that is my current, biggest obstacle."
(see Appendix E)

These narratives align with literature describing how trauma engenders chronic hyperarousal and nervous system dysregulation, which substantially impair expressive capacities and the ability to sustain vocal presence (van der Kolk, 2015; McFarlane, 2010).

One respondent emphasized that even powerful positive emotions can interfere with singing:

"I experience music deeply… tears that have come while singing… made it challenging to sing, but they're tears out of fulfillment." (See Appendix)

Although less studied, such affective arousal can produce physiological responses such as tear production or heart-rate increase that temporarily disrupt motor control and vocal consistency (Fredrickson, 2001; Juslin and Västfjäll, 2008).

Interviews with teachers trained in secondary modalities further illustrate how chronic emotional burden can be internalized and embodied. Beth Freeman turned to psychology and hypnotherapy after performance anxiety began to limit her vocal confidence (see Appendix I). Susan Witt-Butler studied and incorporated mindfulness and the Alexander Technique into her studio after struggles in her youth with negative voices in her head tearing down her self-confidence (see Appendix I). Karen Clark, now a Feldenkrais practitioner, described discovering years of negative self-talk during movement-based lessons (Feldenkrais, 1977):

> *"...I noticed for the first time when I was talking to myself in a really horrible way… how do I get up in front of people and sing with this?"*
> *(see Appendix I)*

Melinda Moreau, a voice teacher who incorporates mindfulness and non-judgment in her studio practice, reflected:

> *"It's hard to get over early child abuse... my parents created an atmosphere of fear... I was always afraid."*
> *(see Appendix I)*

She attributes this internalized fear to long-term inhibition of full vocal expression, illustrating how embedded emotional experiences can limit both technical and artistic development.

The term "embedded emotional experiences" refers to emotionally charged memories, often formed during early life or through repeated exposure to distress, that become internalized and continue to shape behavior, posture, self-perception, and physiological patterns well into adulthood (Monti, 2018; Kearney, 2022).

In performance contexts, these experiences can manifest as muscular tension, restricted breath flow, or an inner critical voice that interferes with expressive freedom and vocal confidence. Monti (2018) explains how early life distress becomes stored in the body, subtly influencing habitual movement patterns and limiting expressive range. Kearney (2022) adds that such experiences are not solely psychological but are somatically encoded, producing chronic states of hypervigilance or shutdown that inhibit full bodily engagement. Austin (2009) further highlights how trauma and internalized self-critical narratives can restrict vocal freedom, preventing singers from accessing their full expressive and emotional capacities.

Having examined how emotional interference can disrupt vocal coordination, we now turn to the emotional realities that singers bring into the studio. This next section explores the broader emotional needs of students and the importance of acknowledging them in the learning environment.

2. **Students struggle and need emotional support.**

Emotional struggle is an inherent part of being human. Even well-adjusted individuals encounter periods of difficulty, such as grieving the loss of a loved one, navigating transitions, or coping with the emotional weight of day-to-day life. For those with past or ongoing trauma, emotional challenges may be more complex, persistent, and deeply rooted, often manifesting as chronic psychological distress, affective dysregulation, and difficulty processing emotional experiences (Fang et al., 2020; McFarlane, 2010). It is therefore essential for voice teachers to recognize that many students bring some level of emotional burden into the studio, whether it is immediately visible or not.

In recent years, the emotional load carried by younger generations has been compounded by large-scale global and societal disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic in particular disrupted the psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults, resulting in significant increases in anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation (Son et al., 2020; Rao and Fisher, 2021). Longitudinal studies have even observed neurobiological changes in adolescent brain maturation linked to pandemic-related stress, particularly in areas governing emotion regulation (Gotlib et al., 2023). Beyond the pandemic, young people continue to face challenges such as economic instability, climate anxiety, social fragmentation, and a perceived erosion of opportunity, all of which contribute to a heightened sense of emotional fatigue and uncertainty (Quirico, 2023).

Given this context, I believe voice teachers must cultivate a heightened awareness of the emotional landscape their students are navigating. It is not sufficient to focus solely on technical development when a singer's mental or emotional state is actively interfering with their ability to engage, process feedback, or perform.

In my anonymous questionnaire I asked participants how frequently emotions interfered with their ability to focus or make progress in voice lessons (Figure 3). Only 17.2% reported "never," while the majority reported at least some level of interference:

- 3.5% said "always,"

- 20.7% said “often,”
- 27.6% said “sometimes,” and
- 31% said “occasionally.”

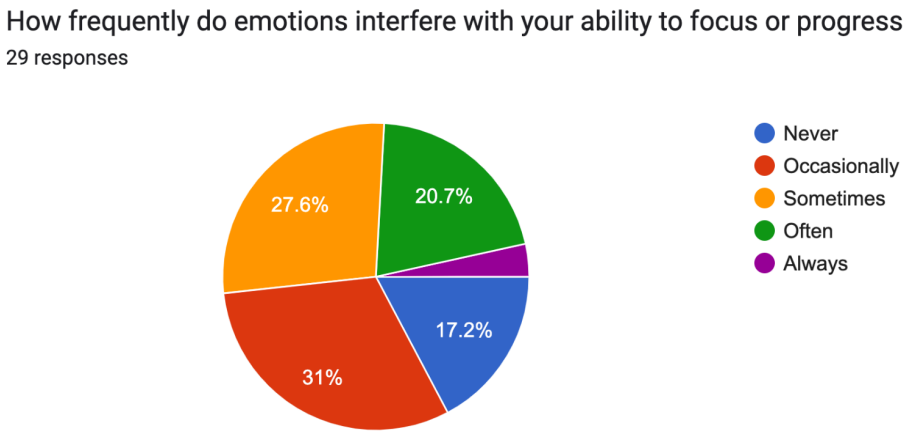


Figure 3: Frequency of emotional interference in voice lessons

This pie chart illustrates responses to the survey question: *“How frequently do emotions interfere with your ability to focus or progress in voice lessons?”* Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Interestingly, 100% of participants indicated that emotions had impacted their ability to sing at some point, suggesting that the “never” responses likely referred to lesson environments specifically, and not performances or other musical contexts.

When asked to what extent their voice teachers had acknowledged or addressed emotional challenges in lessons (Figure 4):

- 14.8% said “not at all,”

- 18.5% said “slightly,”
- 33.3% said “somewhat,”
- 29.6% said “quite a bit,”
- and 3.7% said “extensively.”

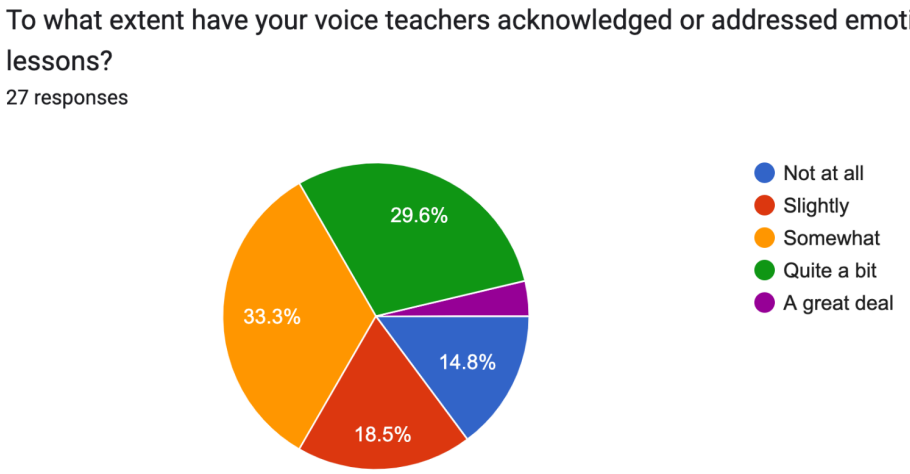


Figure 4: Teacher acknowledgment of emotional challenges in voice lessons

This pie chart illustrates responses to the survey question: *“To what extent have your voice teachers acknowledged or addressed emotional challenges in lessons?”* Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

The largest proportion of respondents selected “somewhat,” followed closely by “quite a bit,” indicating that many students have had at least some degree of emotional support from a teacher. However, when asked if they had ever had a teacher who was ineffective or unhelpful in addressing emotional challenges, 44.4% said yes, while 55.6% said no (Figure 5). This near-even divide suggests that emotionally responsive teaching is still far from universal.

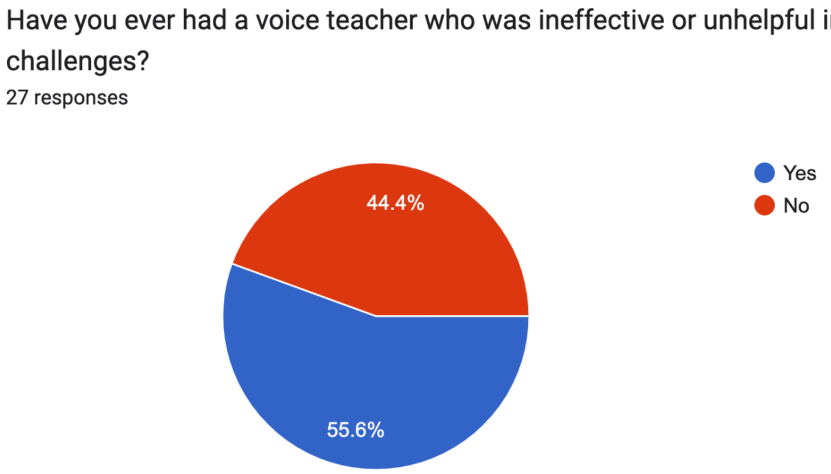


Figure 5: Experience with voice teachers who were ineffective in addressing emotional challenges

This pie chart illustrates responses to the survey question: *"Have you ever had a voice teacher who was ineffective or unhelpful in addressing emotional challenges?"* Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

One limitation I recognized in hindsight was that I did not ask participants how many voice teachers they had worked with over the course of their singing lives. This would have provided additional context for understanding their responses, particularly for those who either "lucked out" with a compassionate teacher or cycled through multiple teachers of varying effectiveness. Reflecting on my own experience, I have worked with six dedicated voice teachers across different stages of life. Only one actively addressed emotional challenges, two were kind but lacked emotional tools, and three ranged from emotionally disengaged to borderline abusive. I suspect others may have similar experiences.

When invited to share what they found unhelpful (Figure 6), the most frequently cited teacher behaviors were:

- Dismissing emotional concerns entirely,

- Ignoring visible signs of emotional distress,
- Encouraging a “push through it” mentality, and
- Focusing solely on technical elements without acknowledging emotion.

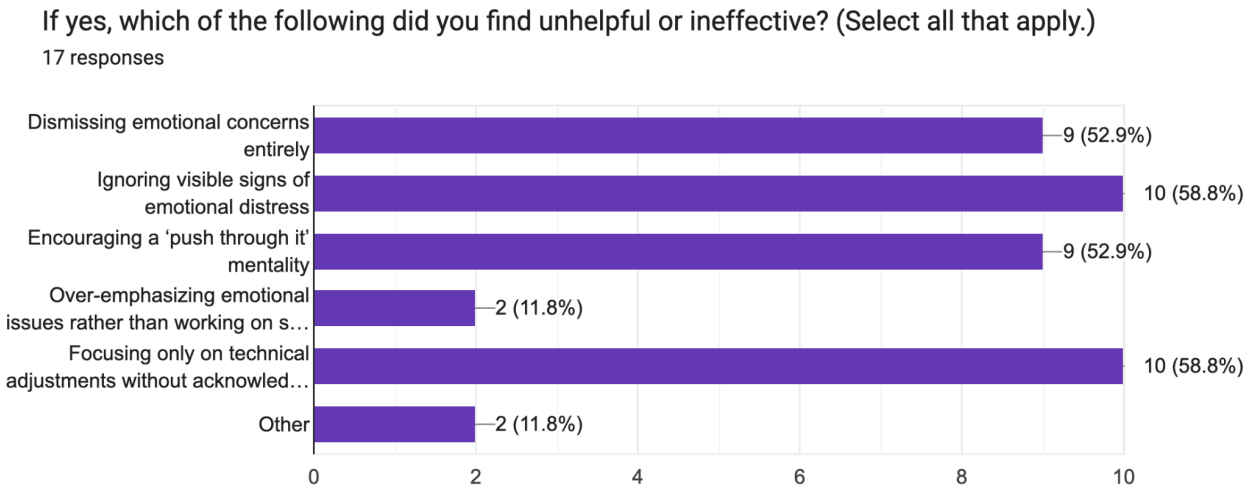


Figure 6: Strategies voice teachers have used to support students emotionally

This bar graph presents data from the anonymous survey, showing participants’ responses to a multiple-choice question about strategies their voice teachers have used to address emotional challenges. The vertical axis lists the response options provided in the survey, while the horizontal axis indicates the number of participants who selected each option (see Appendix E).

These responses strongly suggest that students are not looking for therapy in the studio, but do want their emotional realities seen, respected, and accommodated.

When asked how important it is that their voice teacher acknowledges and helps manage emotional challenges (Figure 7), students responded:

- 37.9% — “Extremely important,”

- 44.8% — “Very important,”

- 17.2% — “Moderately important.”
  Notably, no one selected “slightly important” or “not important.”

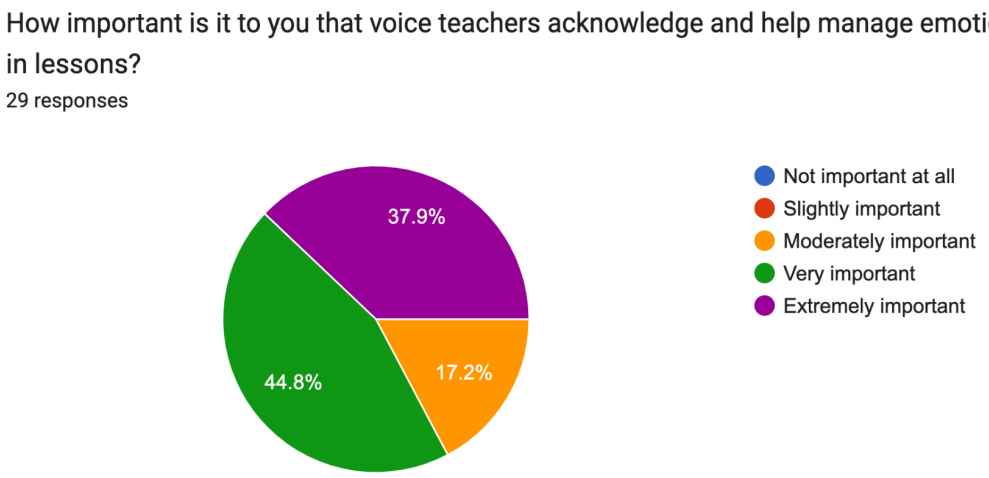


Figure 7: Perceived importance of voice teachers acknowledging emotional challenges

This pie chart illustrates responses to the survey question: *“How important is it to you that voice teachers acknowledge and help manage emotional challenges in lessons?”* Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Teacher Perspectives

Teachers surveyed were equally clear: emotionally struggling students are a regular part of their studio experience (Figure 8). When asked how often they observed students dealing with emotional challenges:

- 25% said “frequently,”

- 41.7% said “regularly,” and

- 33.3% said “occasionally.”

No teacher selected “rarely” or “never.”

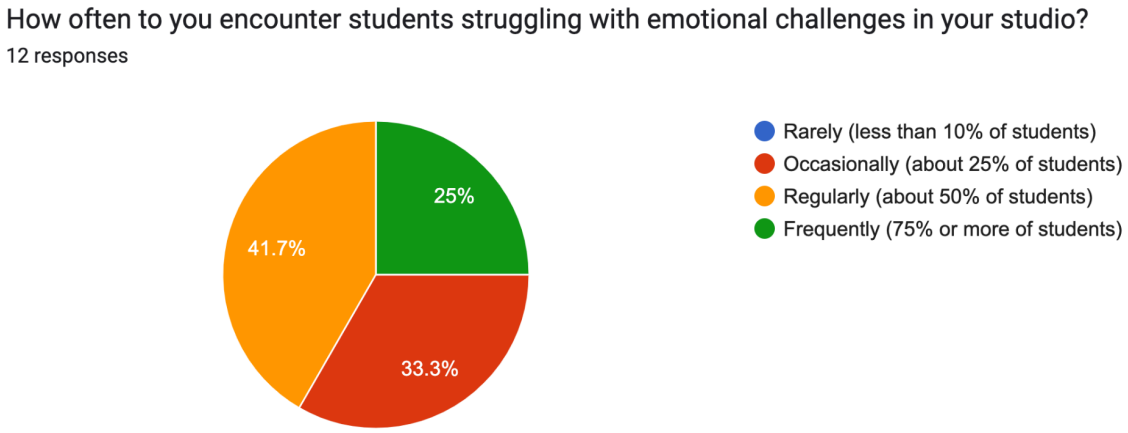


Figure 8: Frequency with which teachers encounter students struggling with emotional challenges

This pie chart illustrates responses to the survey question: *“How often do you encounter students struggling with emotional challenges in your studio?”* Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

The data gathered from both students and teachers affirms that emotional difficulty is not an isolated or uncommon occurrence, but a consistent and influential reality in the voice studio. Emotional struggle is a frequent part of the learning environment and one that cannot be ignored in conversations about student progress and vocal development. Students not only report experiencing emotional interference regularly, but also overwhelmingly express a desire for their teachers to acknowledge and support them through these challenges. This underscores the need to view emotional well-being as a central, rather than peripheral, consideration in vocal instruction. With a clearer understanding of the emotional landscape students navigate, the following section explores how some teachers are actively adapting their practices to better support students’ emotional needs within the voice studio.

3. Effective teachers are actively seeking and applying supportive strategies.

While emotional struggle among students is widespread, some voice teachers are responding with intentionality and creativity (Helding, 2020; Welch et al., 2020). Survey and interview studies in the literature suggest that many educators are not only aware of the emotional dimensions affecting their students but are also adapting their pedagogy in response. For example, Fletcher, Davidson, and Krause (2024) found that effective voice teachers tailor their instruction to meet students' individual vocal, physical, and emotional needs, an approach grounded in empathic awareness and flexible pedagogy.

When asked to what extent they considered emotions while working with students (Figure 9), no teachers selected "not at all" or "slightly." The majority chose "Quite a bit" (6 respondents), and, "A great deal" (7 respondents), with just one respondent selecting "somewhat."

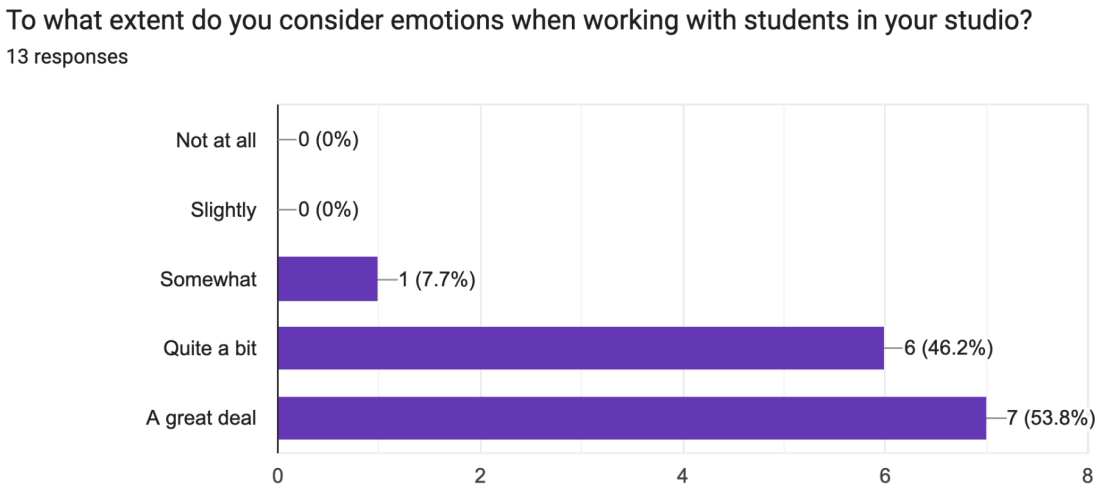


Figure 9: Extent to which teachers consider emotions when working with students

This bar graph illustrates responses to the survey question posed to teachers: *"To what extent do you consider emotions when working with students in your studio?"* The vertical axis displays the range of response options, from *"Not at all"* to *"A great deal,"* while the horizontal axis indicates the number of participants who selected each option. Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Similarly, when asked how much they believed emotional challenges impacted a singer's technique or performance, 100% of respondents selected either "quite a bit" or "a great deal." This suggests that the teachers who responded to this survey are not only aware of the issue but already integrating emotional awareness into their pedagogical framework.

In a question about what strategies they were using to help students navigate emotional challenges (Figure 10), the most commonly selected responses were:

- Empathetic listening,
- Encouraging mindfulness or grounding,
- Adjusting vocal exercises based on the student's emotional state, and
- Using breathing exercises for relaxation.

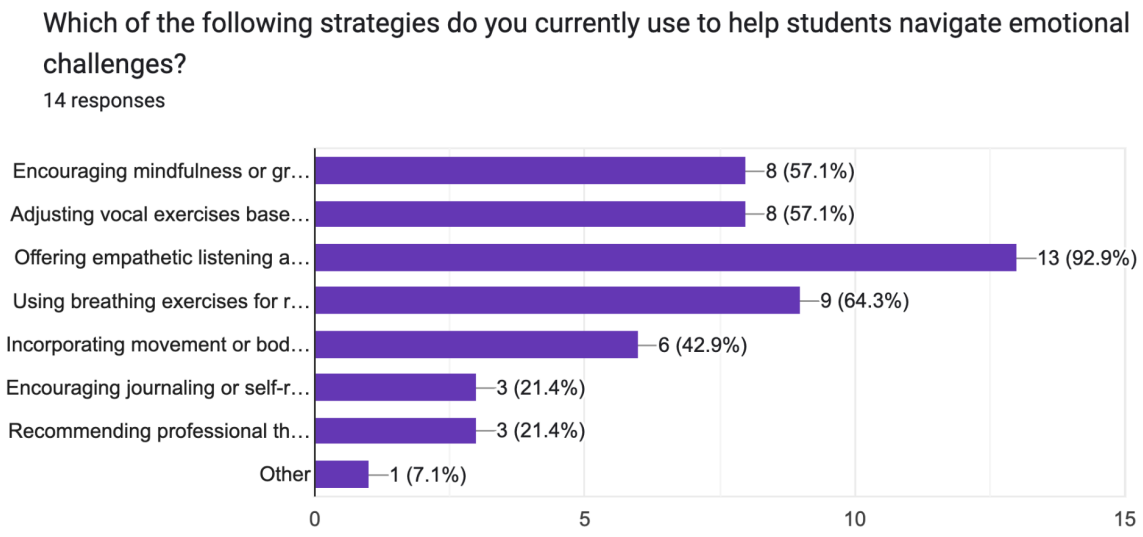


Figure 10: Strategies currently used by teachers to help students navigate emotional challenges

This bar graph illustrates responses to the survey question: *"Which of the following strategies do you currently use to help students navigate emotional challenges?"* The vertical axis lists the types of strategies participants could choose from, while the horizontal axis indicates the number of participants who selected each option. Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Participants could select multiple strategies, and many appeared to use a combination of techniques. These practices reflect an emerging blend of intuitive, body-based, and somatically informed approaches to teaching that prioritize the student's emotional presence as much as their vocal product.

When asked about the perceived effectiveness of their current strategies, most respondents rated them as "moderately effective," suggesting a sense of progress but also room for improvement. This impression was further supported by responses to the question: *"Are there areas related to emotional well-being in vocal instruction that you wish you understood better?" (Figure 11)* The top answers were "Strategies for helping students manage performance anxiety", "Understanding the psychological aspects of singing and performance", and "Setting healthy emotional boundaries in the studio".

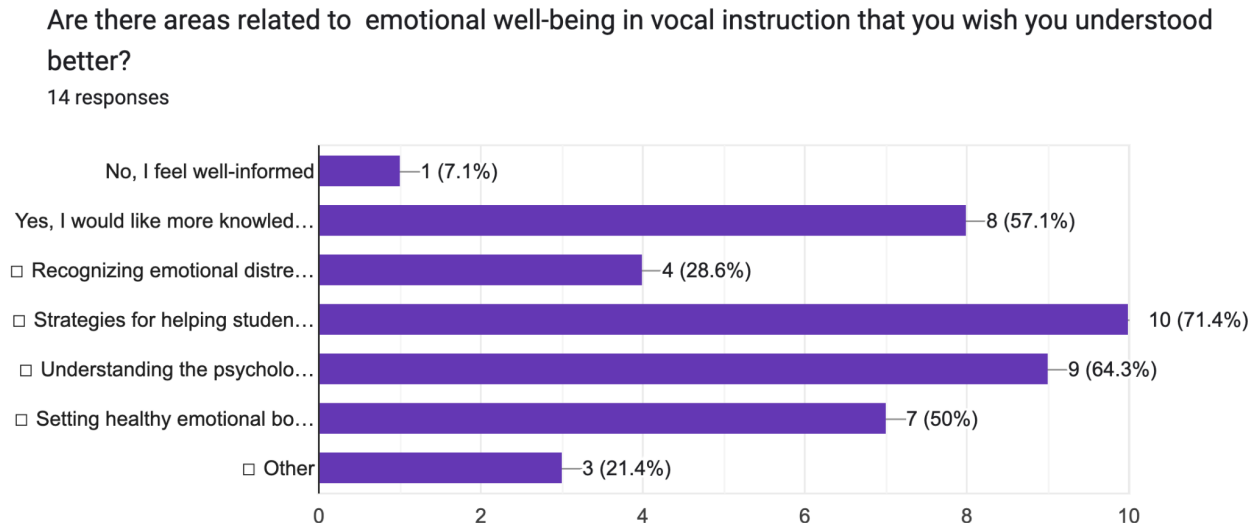


Figure 11: Areas of emotional well-being in vocal instruction that teachers wish to understand better

This bar graph illustrates responses to the survey question: *"Are there areas related to emotional well-being in vocal instruction that you wish you understood better?"* Participants could select *"No"* or, if they selected *"Yes,"* choose from a list of specific areas for further learning. The vertical axis lists the response options, and the horizontal axis indicates the number of participants who selected each one. Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

“Understanding how intense emotional strain/distress/etc. impacts the voice on a physiological level.”

Another added:

“Understanding and helping others with dissociation.”

(see Appendix E)

These responses indicate a strong interest in deepening knowledge not only about pedagogy and communication, but about the underlying mechanisms through which emotion impacts the body and the voice. This also may suggest that teachers are open to new ideas and resources.

Despite the clear interest in supporting students more effectively, the vast majority of survey respondents indicated that they had received no formal training in psychology, counseling, or emotional wellness (Figure 12). Among those who had pursued related education, their training fell into three categories:

- Formal education in psychology or counseling,
- Independent study (e.g., books, online resources), and
- Participation in workshops or continuing education events.

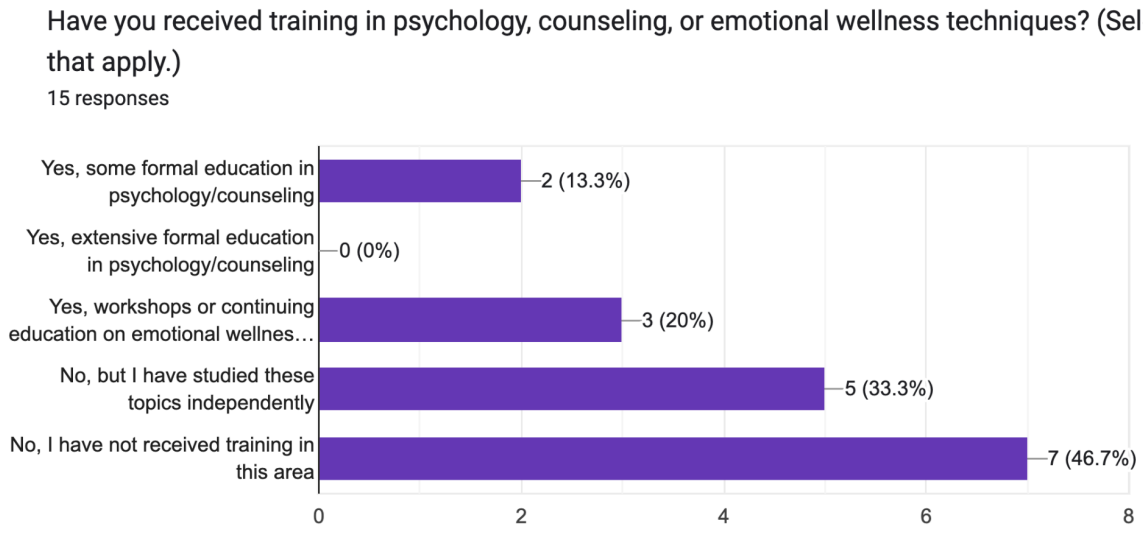


Figure 12: Teacher training in psychology, counseling, or emotional wellness techniques

This bar graph illustrates responses to the survey question: *"Have you received training in psychology, counseling, or emotional wellness techniques?"* Participants could select all options that applied. The vertical axis lists the types of training or lack thereof, while the horizontal axis indicates the number of participants who selected each option. Data derived from the anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Although the questionnaire allowed for multiple selections, most participants selected only one avenue of exploration, suggesting that many are still early in their journey toward integrating emotional awareness into their teaching practice, or have only encountered one avenue of exploration, or lack resources to pursue other avenues, or may not have realized they could check more than one. Regardless, the responses may reinforce the idea that while teachers are experimenting with emotion-aware strategies, many have not yet had access to comprehensive or interdisciplinary training in this area.

To complement the survey data, I also conducted interviews with several teachers whom I selected based on their reputations for emotionally responsive pedagogy and their demonstrated commitment to continued learning. As such, their alignment with the core themes of this study is already evident. For that reason, their perspectives are not discussed in detail here but will be explored more fully in a later section (Integrating

Non-Therapeutic Modalities), where their specific insights and applications are examined in context.

This last section suggests that many teachers are already experimenting with emotion-aware strategies, even in the absence of formal training. Their responses indicate a shared belief that vocal technique and emotional well-being are deeply interconnected. Building on this, the next section explores how non-therapeutic modalities, such as breath work, grounding, and movement-based practices, could be ethically and effectively integrated into voice teaching to support both technical development and emotional regulation.

4. **Non-therapeutic modalities can be effectively and ethically integrated into teaching.**

Ethical and Practical Considerations

As we move into the section on how non-therapeutic modalities can be effectively and ethically integrated into voice teaching, it is important first to define what we mean by non-therapeutic and ethical within this context. Non-therapeutic modalities refer to approaches that support emotional regulation and vocal coordination without claiming to offer psychological treatment or trauma resolution (Gross, 2015; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz and Walach, 2014). These tools can be safely used by voice teachers as part of vocal pedagogy when employed within appropriate ethical boundaries.

In the context of voice pedagogy, ethics are defined not only by safeguarding student wellbeing, but also by maintaining professional boundaries, informed consent, and pedagogical transparency (National Association of Teachers of Singing, no date; Moniz, 2025). When incorporating non-therapeutic modalities, voice teachers must remain clear that these practices are intended to support learning and regulation, not to diagnose or treat emotional or psychological conditions (SAMHSA, 2014). Ethical teaching in this context involves choosing tools that align with a teacher's scope of practice, presenting them clearly as optional, and creating a studio culture that respects the agency, comfort, and emotional boundaries of each student (Chafouleas et al., 2016).

Creating Safety: The Foundation

A recurring theme across interviews was the primacy of safety. Teachers and singers consistently emphasized that “being heard” and having emotions acknowledged establishes the psychological ground from which vocal exploration becomes possible (see Appendices E, I, and O)..

These interventions shift students out of evaluative “threat” states and into exploratory, embodied engagement paving the way for genuine vocal freedom.

Breath-Based Regulation

Joe Persinger, PhD, shared practical breath techniques intended to access parasympathetic regulation safely and simply (see Appendix I and J). He described exercises like the “4/7/8 breathing skill” as easy to teach and implement:

> *“Place the tongue on the roof of the mouth… exhale completely through your mouth using a whoosh sound… inhale quietly and softly through your nose for a mental count of four, hold for seven, then exhale for eight…”* (see Appendix J)

Such practices engage the parasympathetic nervous system, helping to downregulate sympathetic arousal and reduce muscle tension (Thayer and Lane, 2000; Porges, 2007). Stabilized breath promotes more relaxed phonation and better technical control (Titze, 2000), while improved emotional equilibrium supports focused, expressive performance.

Energy-Based Somatic Support: Jin Shin Jyutsu

Deborah Myers described how her acupressure-based system creates internal balance through accessible self-care routines:

> *“When the energy’s flowing, the breath follows. When the breath is there, the energy flows and follows... the voice doesn’t have to work so hard when the breath is there.”* (see Appendix I)

She frames her “Daily Clean Your House Flow” as a foundational daily reset that makes embodied ease available spontaneously:

> *“That step where I said give yourself a hug—that’s the first step of the day... prior to your singing, practice, or performance, just giving yourself a hug for a moment and then cupping the sternum and holding the tummy will bring your body right back to the memory of what it’s searching for.”*
> *(see Appendix I)*

I am particularly drawn to her approach because the exercises are simple, accessible, and can be done independently by the student, without requiring any physical contact or touch from the teacher. Her approach, while rooted in complementary energy medicine Jin Shin Jyutsu (Burmeister, 1980), can be contextualized through broader frameworks of neurovisceral integration: supporting autonomic balance creates physiological space for expressive engagement (Thayer and Lane, 2000). Preliminary work on related acupressure practices suggests potential autonomic modulation (McFadden et al., 2012) and Millspaugh, J. et al. (2021) found Jin Shin Jyutsu is a viable option for stress reduction.

Mindfulness, Grounding, and the Teacher’s Self-Work

Dr. Alexander Kahn emphasized small, repeatable mindfulness acts as accessible regulatory anchors for both teachers and students:

> *“Just taking time to be aware of the breath from time to time during the day... maybe committing to once an hour I’m going to take three deep breaths. That takes very, very little time... but it clears your headspace so much better than checking social media.”* (see Appendix I)

He also described the role of internal narrative awareness in reducing judgment:

> *“Most of the students’ inner voices are telling them you’re not good enough… to start to notice that voice and then be aware that they have a choice to maybe not believe everything that voice is telling them.”* (see Appendix I)

Susan Witt-Butler echoed the necessity of the teacher’s own grounding:

> *“How can I ground someone else if I can’t do that for myself?... I’ll start with sitting, breathing, grounding... then I’m able to move into whatever we’re doing.”* (see Appendix I)

These reflections align with educational literature emphasizing reflective practice and educator self-regulation as prerequisites for emotionally attuned teaching (Schön, 1983; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). According to Kelchtermans (2009), the way teachers understand themselves and embrace vulnerability shapes both their teaching style and their students' learning experiences

Play and the "Seeker" Mindset

Several educators I interviewed emphasized the role of play in lessons as a way to support emotional regulation and curiosity. Heidi Moss Erickson coined the "seeker" mindset, describing it as an orientation toward exploration and authenticity, while Amanda McTigue described a teacher–student process of jointly seeking authentic expression. Together, these perspectives position play and the "seeker" mode as powerful facilitators of vocal discovery (see Appendix I). By directing attention to low-stakes tasks, whether tying a shoe or imaginative micro-improvisation, teachers help students shift from evaluative inhibition to curiosity-driven experimentation (see Appendix I). This transition activates reward pathways and reduces amygdala-mediated fear, embedding vocalization in a context associated with safety and creativity (Koelsch, 2014; Blood and Zatorre, 2001; Juslin and Västfjäll, 2008). Engagement of the Default Mode Network during imaginative rehearsal further integrates emotional meaning with physical action, reinforcing resilience and expressive freedom (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007; Smallwood and Schooler, 2015; Andrews-Hanna et al., 2014).

As Amanda McTigue put it, simply getting a student "busy" in a non-vocal way breaks the cycle of anxiety:

> *"If I've got a very nervous performer in front of me, maybe the first thing I can do is just get them to tie their shoes. There's nothing more healing. Or why don't you get everything out of your purse and let's lay them out by size…when they get busy, whether they're physically busy or creatively imaginatively busy, they stop trying to sing."* (see Appendix I)

Heidi Moss Erikson further elaborated on the liberating power of play:

“So much of a singer’s life is micromanaged and regulated and play gives them a say and removes the fear of being wrong. So be silly with them.” (see Appendix I)

Somatic Foundations

Teachers who integrate body-based practices into their vocal work highlight how deeply interconnected creativity, physiology, and emotional regulation are for singers. For example, Karen Clark, a Feldenkrais practitioner and voice teacher, explained: *“And so it just becomes, it just opens up like parts of the brain and you're interacting with yourself in a really intimate, beautiful, creative way, right? That's the point. Not goal-oriented. I think that's really hard for most of us”* (see Appendix I). This non–goal-driven approach emphasizes awareness and creativity rather than outcome, offering singers access to freedom in their artistry. Survey data echoed these insights: when asked to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher strategies on a Likert scale, movement or body exercises emerged as a highly rated tool, with 14 out of 19 respondents ranking them as “very effective” (4–5) (Figure 13). This suggests that when teachers incorporated somatic elements, students not only noticed but found them particularly beneficial in reducing tension and supporting vocal ease.

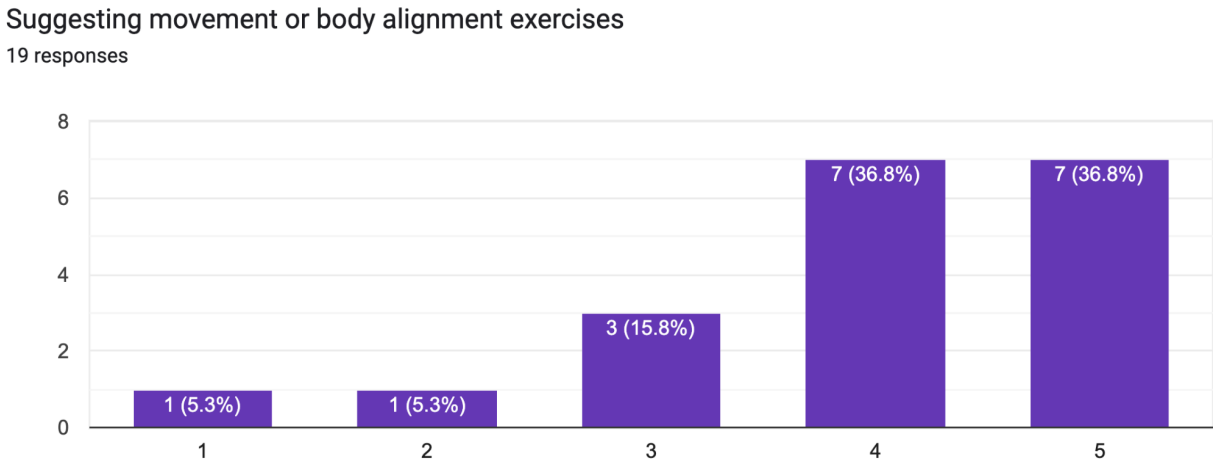


Figure 13:Perceived Helpfulness of Somatic and Emotional Support Methods

Distribution of participant responses to the question*, "If your teacher has used any of the following techniques, how helpful did you find them?"* Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = least effective, 5 = most effective). The vertical axis represents the number of respondents, and the horizontal axis represents the Likert scale values. Data derived from anonymous survey (see Appendix E).

Judy Hoffman, doctor of chiropractic and movement specialist, described the physical mechanisms behind this, noting how habitual compensations such as lifting the chest or tipping the ribcage can create a false sense of diaphragmatic breathing: *"They're tipping their whole rib cage, and then they're getting diaphragmatic breathing and expansion in the front, but not in the back… over time… you start using your superficial accessory respiratory muscles, and so all of this stress starts building up in here"* (see Appendix I). She also emphasized the overlooked importance of pelvic floor coordination with the diaphragm, suggesting that *"the pelvic floor is really understated in its importance of being a functional structure in allowing the body to be more resilient in singing"* (see Appendix I). Deborah Meyes, a practitioner of Jin Shin Jyutsu, offered a more restorative perspective, highlighting how body-based methods can release accumulated tension: *"So we can help the body literally let go of whatever got created in the moment to give itself back all the good possibilities"* (see Appendix I).

These findings resonate with a growing body of literature on somatic education. Body Mapping educates singers about accurate bodily representation, correcting misconceptions and aligning intention with function (Moreno, 2022). It enhances sensory-motor integrity and self-evaluation, helping to reduce biomechanical interference (Moreno, 2022). Its synergy with the Alexander Technique (Gelb, 2013), through principles of inhibition and conscious direction, supports psychophysical unity, while Body Mapping provides explicit anatomical imagery to reinforce efficient use (Conable and Conable, 2000). The Feldenkrais Method (Feldenkrais, 1977) similarly uses gentle, mindful movement to explore alternative patterns, reducing habitual tension and improving functional ease. Participants in emerging studies report increased awareness and more natural vocal function after Feldenkrais-informed

work (Paparo, 2022; Reyneke, 2024). These methods share a neuroplastic premise: directed attention to subtle sensation expands the nervous system's repertoire, leading to more adaptive and less effortful vocal behavior (Feldenkrais, 1977).

Across breath work, energy-balancing practices, mindfulness, play, and somatic education, the most effective integration of non-therapeutic modalities occurs within a framework of safety, teacher presence, and ethical clarity. These modalities do not replace technical training; rather, they contextualize it, giving the technical work its meaningful "background" so the voice can be shaped from a balanced body-mind state rather than from tension or dysregulation. In this way, vocal technique emerges from a regulated, embodied, and emotionally attuned base. Having outlined specific non-therapeutic tools and how they can be integrated ethically to support students emotionally and vocally, the next section turns to how teachers could deploy and adapt those tools: the necessity of a flexible, student-centered approach that acknowledges individual variability in response and builds a personalized pedagogical toolbox.

5. **A flexible, student-responsive approach is essential.**

No single strategy works for every singer, a point underscored both by existing research and by the findings of this study. Scholarship in music education and psychology emphasizes that learners respond differently to instructional methods depending on their individual experiences and needs (Davidson, 2017; Welch et al., 2019). This was echoed in my anonymous questionnaire, where participants offered widely varied responses to the question, *"If your teacher has used any of the following techniques, how helpful did you find them?"* Some respondents rated mindfulness and grounding techniques as highly effective, while others found empathetic listening, discussion, or breathing exercises for relaxation more beneficial. Still others valued movement-based exercises, journaling, or even teachers recommending therapy. These results highlight that singers perceive and experience support strategies differently, with no universal tool proving effective for all (see Appendix E). Even when using evidence-informed, non-therapeutic modalities, effectiveness depends on how well tools are matched to a singer's emotional state, learning style, history, and current needs (McPherson et al., 2019). A flexible, student-centered approach that treats each singer as a complex interplay of affect, embodiment, cognition, and vocal identity not only increases pedagogical efficacy but also promotes emotional safety and resilience

within the teacher–student relationship (Tomlinson, 2014; Norris, 2012; Welch and McPherson, 2018).

Theoretical Foundation: Learner Variability and Differentiated Pedagogy

Adaptability is central to effective teaching. Differentiated instruction emphasizes that educators should adjust content, process, and outcomes to meet diverse learner needs rather than relying on a single method (Tomlinson, 2014). In music and performance contexts, this involves offering multiple entry points: some students respond to visual imagery, others to kinesthetic cues or narrative framing, especially when emotions influence access to learning (Norris, 2012; Davidson, 2017). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports this approach by promoting varied means of engagement and expression to accommodate student strengths and challenges (Meyer et al., 2014).

Teachers in this study described maintaining a flexible "toolbox" of strategies (such as breath regulation, body awareness cues, playful improvisation, and phrasing adjustments) selected in response to student feedback and emotional presentation (see Appendix I). While most participants were anchored in a primary modality or philosophical orientation, they frequently integrated complementary techniques from other disciplines.

Heidi Moss Erickson emphasized neuroscience and empathy, while expressing a strong aversion to rigid methodologies: *"I'm so against methods or even labels… We have to have a huge toolbox… Every student's going to come at it differently every time… and it's knowing when to shift if it's not working"* (Appendix I). She elaborated that her approach was centered on being "empathy-led" and context-sensitive, particularly when students arrived dysregulated or emotionally blocked. On the subject of play, she stated, *"Play is not a method… There aren't a set of protocols. The goal is daring to experiment"* (Appendix I). Her approach highlights the value of experimentation and student-specific responsiveness rather than procedural consistency.

Acting coach Amanda McTigue also emphasized adaptability, especially in addressing students' mental habits. *"I've had many clients whose nature isn't to be imaginative… Other people love imagining being somewhere. Fine. But for the others, I might say: while you're singing, can you walk around there? Can you just count all of the pencils in the room?"*

(Appendix I). She observed that focusing attention on simple tasks could be grounding and interrupt maladaptive thought spirals: *“That is so compelling that… they’re not holding the other thought”* (Appendix I).

Many teachers stressed that what helps a student one day might not work the next, depending on variables like fatigue, stress, and inner dialogue. This individualized, real-time responsiveness reflects person-centered teaching philosophies, which prioritize the student’s moment-to-moment experience over rigid sequencing or predetermined interventions (Rogers, 1961; Sheridan and McLean, 2010).

Key practices used to support flexibility included:

- Checking in emotionally before starting technical work (Carello and Butler, 2015)
- Offering choices in exercise approaches (e.g., imagery vs. gesture) (Deci and Ryan, 2000: Meyer et al., 2014).
- Adjusting pacing to allow grounding when needed (Tomlinson, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).
- Layering strategies to integrate technical and emotional goals (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007; Thompson and Thompson, 2008).
- Inviting student reflection to reinforce learning (Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984).

This responsive model relies on feedback loops. Teachers read body language, seek verbal input, and use nonjudgmental language to co-create learning. This fosters agency and reduces shame, aligning with collaborative learning models (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Ultimately, when students feel seen and supported, they engage more deeply, experiment more freely, and develop greater artistic and emotional resilience (Thompson and Thompson, 2008).

Pilot Lessons: Testing the Toolbox in Action

To put theory into practice, I designed and delivered three sample lessons, each grounded in a non-therapeutic modality selected for its safety, accessibility, and capacity to support emotional regulation. Five volunteer students completed all three lessons. Their feedback revealed common benefits such as increased ease and awareness, but also highly individualized preferences, reinforcing the importance of flexible pedagogy (see Appendix O).

Lesson 1: Feldenkrais-Informed Voice Exploration emphasized gentle movement, body awareness, and exploration over correction. All five students reported increased calm and curiosity. One student reflected, *"I became acutely aware of my lack of core strength and how that was adding to my shallow breathing and spine/back tension"* (see Appendix O). Another shared, *"The awareness it brought me about my body has been helping me mentally explore how stress affects my singing"* (see Appendix O).

Lesson 2: Mindfulness-Informed Singing introduced present-moment awareness, non-judgment, and gentle breath observation. Reactions were more varied. One student said, *"This approach was more effective in calming me because I am familiar with mindfulness exercises"* (see Appendix O). Another noted, *"It was still hard to be non-judgmental, but easier than the first time,"* while a third found the non-intervention principle distracting: *"I much prefer 'notice without judgment' to 'notice without changing anything'"* (see Appendix O).

Lesson 3: Body Mapping for Singing, based on Alexander Technique principles, engaged students with diagrams, touch cues, and kinesthetic awareness. Three students found this grounding and insightful. One shared, *"It was helpful to see what different parts of my body were doing when I sing"* (see Appendix O). Another appreciated *"exploring and trying to become aware of a space near my ears and jaw joint… there were moments during phonation where I did sense it"* (see Appendix O). However, two students reported difficulty integrating cognitive and physical tasks: *"The diaphragm exercise was hard to remember… but I think that thinking about all of these improved my singing"* (see Appendix O).

Overall, each student found at least one lesson highly beneficial, but their responses highlighted the uniqueness of individual needs. One participant summarized: *"Honestly they*

all have a purpose… which is why having tools like this is great. The bigger the toolbox, the more different problems can be fixed" (see Appendix O).

These lessons illustrate the practical importance of tailoring techniques to the emotional and physical readiness of each student, an essential principle for safe, effective, and emotionally aware voice teaching.

6. **Access and awareness remain barriers**.

Another theme emerging from this study is that while valuable knowledge and resources to support emotional regulation in singers exists, it seems like there are barriers to their accessibility, dissemination, and implementation among voice teachers. Every voice teacher that I interviewed noted that these topics were absent from their formal education (see Appendix I).

The literature review for this project revealed an abundance of relevant scholarship on emotion, physiology, and voice, including studies on the Feldenkrais Method (Kines, 2022), Alexander Technique (Cobb, 2022), body mapping (Conable and Conable, 2000), and mindfulness (Grape et al., 2003; Diaz, 2018). However, much of this information remains confined to academic formats, posing challenges for practitioners not steeped in scholarly language or without access to journals.

This disconnect is supported by the survey data in Appendix F, which showed that teachers with BA or MA degrees were slightly less likely to actively consider emotional factors in their teaching or report satisfaction with the tools they had. In contrast, those who pursued independent study via workshops, personal inquiry, or informal training were more likely to use and feel confident in emotional support strategies (see Appendix F).

Additionally, none of the students in the sample lessons (Appendix O), some of whom were university-trained, had previously encountered any of the somatic or mindfulness-based tools used in the lessons. This further illustrates how such methods, though supported in literature, may not be embedded in mainstream vocal instruction.

This disconnect is well-documented in music education research. Odendaal (2019) argues that the inaccessibility of academic language and platforms limits uptake by teachers, and

calls for more accessible knowledge translation methods. A similar critique appears in a podcast by John Henny, where he reflects on reading an academic voice science book: “I remember reading one paragraph and I needed to take a nap… [The author] later admitted that it was written for his scientific peers… Bringing it down to the level of the end user is what I feel is missing…the bridge between the scientists and the people that have to get out there and sing” ((Henny, Irene and Harris, 2019). This directly echoes concerns raised by study participants and suggests a persistent lack of infrastructure for translating knowledge into usable forms.

Reflecting on my own training, early exposure to Feldenkrais (Feldenkrais, 1977) and Alexander Technique (Gelb, 2013) shaped my awareness of other modalities that could be applied to singers and singing. In his interview, Dr. Alexander Kahn described a program where Alexander work is integrated directly into college music department curricula, a model that could promote greater acceptance and usage (see Appendix I). However, most institutions lack qualified faculty to implement such programs (Cobb, 2022), and I posit, I don't see the importance of paying an extra professor to implement it.

This study suggests the problem is not a lack of information, but insufficient systems for translating and sharing it. Broader communication, accessible resources, and structural inclusion of somatic practices in teacher education could reduce barriers and better support student wellbeing.

Conclusion

This project began with a question: is emotional support truly needed by singers, and if so, how can teachers ethically and effectively provide it? The answer, resoundingly, is yes. Students reported that emotions, from anxiety and nerves to deeper challenges, can block healthy vocal production, and they valued teachers who responded with care. Teachers, in turn, shared strategies that ranged from breath work and grounding to mindful movement, journaling, and empathetic listening, all of which supported resilience alongside vocal development. In this sense, I achieved my aim: to better understand the impact of emotion on singing and to gather real-world strategies that voice teachers can use without crossing therapeutic boundaries.

This study also helped me meet my personal learning goals. It expanded my awareness of the subtle ways emotions and technique intersect, challenged me to think more flexibly in my own teaching, and affirmed that being responsive to the whole person creates deeper trust and progress in the studio. It also revealed gaps: while scholarship on emotion and pedagogy exists, it remains largely in academic silos and is not always accessible to practitioners. Likewise, no single strategy emerged as “the” answer. Participants rated different modalities differently highlighting that emotional support in singing is highly individual, and sometimes what helps one singer may not work at all for another.

Like any small-scale project, this one had limitations. The pool of participants was modest, my perspective as an insider researcher inevitably shaped the analysis, and the findings cannot be generalized to all singers or teachers. Yet within those limits, the results still shine a light on a need for ongoing dialogue between voice pedagogy, psychology, and somatic practice. Future research could look more closely at how insights from neuroscience and trauma studies might inform teaching, or at how professional organizations like the National Association of Teachers of Singing can help bridge the gap between research and studio practice by equipping teachers with practical, accessible tools.

Ultimately, this study has affirmed my belief that emotional awareness and pedagogical flexibility are not “extras” but essentials in voice teaching. Supporting the singer as a whole person creates not only better artistry but a more humane and sustainable practice for both students and teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Approved Application for Ethical Approval

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course. Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk). This document is also available in Welsh.
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.
STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Christa Durand				
2	Tick all boxes that apply:		Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student	X

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	WAPPAR
4	Campus:	Carmarthen
5	E-mail address:	ChristaDurand@gmail.com
6	Contact Telephone Number:	707-480-5889
	For students:	

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7	Student Number:	2226055
8	Programme of Study:	MA Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Louise Emanuel/Julie Crossman/Debbie Winter

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)		**YES**	X	**NO**	☐
					Date	
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): ***Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval***	Research Degrees Committee		☐		
		Institute Research Committee		☐		
		Other (write in) WAPPAR Ethics Board Rep.		X		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	**UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice**	x
2	**UWTSD Research Data Management Policy**	x
3	*[List any other relevant documents here]*	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
7		Employed	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐

9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	From Affect to Artistry: Understanding Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role		
2	Proposed start date:	January 2025	Proposed end date:	October 2025
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) **Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below:** *Purpose of Research Activity* *Proposed Research Question* *Aims of Research Activity* *Objectives of Research Activity* Demonstrate, briefly, how **<u>Existing Research</u>** has informed the proposed activity and explain *What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge* *How it addresses an area of importance.*			
3	**Purpose of Research Activity** This research project aims to explore how emotions influence students in their singing practice, including emotions specifically related to their singing as well as those stemming from other areas of their lives. It examines the extent to which these emotional experiences create physical or psychological barriers that impact singing technique. Additionally, the study investigates whether voice instructors have effective and ethical strategies to help singers navigate and alleviate these emotional challenges, enabling them to perform with greater ease and confidence. (this box should expand as you type)			
4	**Research Question** How do emotions impact singing practice, and to what extent do voice instructors integrate awareness and strategies to address emotional barriers in their teaching? (this box should expand as you type)			
5	**Aims of Research Activity** This project aims to examine the physiological and psychological effects of emotions on singers and their vocal performance. Additionally, it seeks to identify the extent to which voice instructors			

	recognize the impact of these emotional influences and the strategies they implement to help singers navigate them effectively in studio settings. (this box should expand as you type)
6	**Objectives of Research Activity** **Investigate Emotional Impact on Vocal Performance:** Explore both the physiological and psychological effects of emotions, such as muscle tension, restricted breathing, and cognitive disruptions, on singers, emphasizing how these factors limit artistic and technical performance. **Evaluate Voice Instructors' Approaches to Emotional Challenges:** Assess how frequently voice instructors recognize and address emotional barriers in their teaching, as well as the strategies they use to help singers manage these challenges effectively. **Identify and Develop Strategies for Addressing Emotional Barriers:** Examine current strategies used by instructors, such as vocal exercises, body alignment techniques, and breathing practices, to identify effective methods. The study aims to fill gaps by creating a practical resource for voice instructors to support students in navigating emotional challenges. **Provide Comprehensive Insights Through Diverse Data Collection:** Use a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review, observations, interviews, and anonymous surveys, to gather comprehensive data on instructors' techniques and students' experiences with emotional challenges and their impact on vocal performance. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	This study will employ a mixed-methods approach to explore how an individual's emotions affects vocal performance and voice instructors' practices for addressing it, using a combination of literature review, observations, dialogue and interviews, and anonymous feedback. This methodology will provide a comprehensive understanding by integrating both theoretical knowledge and firsthand accounts from teachers and singers. **Literature Review:** The project will begin with an extensive literature review to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the physiological and psychological effects of emotions on singers. This review will include current research on emotional regulation, vocal pedagogy, and somatic practices in music education. By synthesizing findings, the literature review will identify key factors that influence singers' ability to learn and perform and examine existing interventions. This will form the foundation for the observational and interactive phases of the study, with a focus on the role of voice instructors in addressing emotional challenges ethically and effectively. **Observation** The next phase involves observing voice lessons and coaching sessions to document teachers' strategies for addressing emotional challenges and promoting relaxation. Observations will focus on vocal exercises, body alignment techniques, breathing exercises, and any tools or approaches used to reduce performance tension. By observing these sessions, I will identify patterns in

	instructional techniques and strategies that appear effective in helping students manage emotional and physical barriers to singing. The goal is to gather authentic insights into the practical application of emotional support strategies in real-time instructional settings. **Interviews and Data Analysis** Following the observation phase, I will conduct one-on-one interviews with voice instructors and selected students to gain in-depth insights into the instructors' approaches to addressing emotional challenges in the studio. The interviews will focus on teachers' awareness of how emotions impact vocal performance, the specific strategies they employ to support students, and the outcomes they have observed. Instructors will also be invited to reflect on their teaching philosophies regarding emotional well-being in vocal practice. Students will be interviewed individually to discuss their experiences with emotional challenges during lessons, including any tools or techniques that have helped them navigate these feelings. This qualitative data will provide a deeper understanding of both instructor intentions and student perspectives on the effectiveness of these strategies. To analyze the data, I will use thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and themes across the interviews. **Anonymous Feedback** To capture a broader and potentially more candid range of responses, the study will also incorporate anonymous feedback through online surveys. Instructors and students will have the opportunity to submit anonymous responses about their experiences and perceptions of emotional challenges and how these affect vocal performance and learning. This method allows participants to express thoughts they may feel uncomfortable sharing in interviews, enhancing the depth and reliability of the data. The surveys will include questions designed to gather insights into the prevalence of specific emotional experiences, awareness of coping mechanisms, and perceptions of the effectiveness of teaching strategies. The data collected through these surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, providing a quantitative sense of how common certain experiences are among participants. By combining survey feedback with observational and interview data, this study aims to provide a well-rounded exploration of how emotions influence singing and the pedagogical approaches used to address them. The integration of theoretical, observational, and interactive data collection methods ensures that the research captures both established knowledge and practical applications, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of emotional challenges in vocal instruction. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Research will take place in either my home studio, or at my business, Music to My Ears. Both are located in Cotati, California, in the United States of America. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK

	If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	My research activities, taking place in Cotati, California, United States, will strictly adhere to all ethical considerations, ensuring respect for the rights and welfare of all participants. In the context of local guidelines or stipulations, it's pertinent to note that the state of California does not have any specific regulations, licenses, or permissions that govern private music studios, such as the ones we intend to use for our research. Nonetheless, we commit to conducting our research with the highest ethical standards, informed by internationally recognized research ethics principles. The nature of my research, conducted within a private music studio setting, does not expose participants to any particular cultural or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities. All interactions will be held in a professional, respectful manner, with complete transparency about the research goals and procedures. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and privacy will be safeguarded at all times. *(this box should expand as you type)*

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents **NOT** publicly available?	**NO**	X
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	**YES**	**NO**
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	X
13	A resilient Wales	☐	X
14	A healthier Wales	☐	X
15	A more equal Wales	☐	X
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	X
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	X
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	X
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	x	☐
2	Use of interviews?	x	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	x	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	x
5	Use of video or audio recording?	x	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	x
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	x	
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	x
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	x
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	x
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	x
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	x
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	x
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	x
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	x
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	x
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☐

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	x
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	x	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	x
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	x
5	Prisoners?	☐	x

6	Young offenders?	☐	x
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	x
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	x
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	x

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	The proposed research expects to involve a select group of between 5 to 12 participants. This size is chosen for its manageability, and to allow for in-depth qualitative analysis. *(this box should expand as you type)*
11	Who will the participants be?	The participants in this study will be recruited from two primary groups: students currently enrolled at my studio and professional and amateur singers from my network of colleagues. This approach will provide a diverse pool of individuals, encompassing a wide range of ages, skill levels, and years of vocal study. By including participants with varying levels of experience, the study will capture a broad perspective on how strong emotions affect vocal performance across different stages of learning and expertise. This diversity will also allow for a more comprehensive assessment of instructors' approaches to managing strong emotions with students of different abilities and backgrounds. *(this box should expand as you type)*
12	How will you identify the participants?	The inclusion criteria for participants will ensure a diverse representation by selecting individuals who meet the following conditions: 1. Are currently enrolled as students at my studio or are colleagues in a professional capacity, either as singers or teachers. 2. Are over the age of 18, as minors are excluded to avoid the need for guardian consent. 3. Possess varying levels of vocal ability, from beginner to advanced. 4. Represent a range of age groups. 5. Have different amounts of vocal training experience.

		This study will not exclude participants based on whether they have experienced emotional challenges affecting their singing. For anonymous surveys, participants' emotional histories will not be known in advance. Part of the goal is to gather data on how many individuals, regardless of background or experience, report emotions that influence their singing practice and performance. Responses from individuals who have not experienced such challenges will serve as valuable data points to establish a comprehensive understanding of emotional factors in singing. By including participants with diverse experiences and skill levels, the study aims to explore a broad spectrum of perspectives on emotional influences and the strategies employed by voice instructors to address them. *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	X	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	X	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	X	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	X	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	X	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	X	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	X	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	X	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	X	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			

	(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	**Full risk assessment completed and appended?**	**Yes**	☐
		No	☐
2	**Risks to participants** For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: Given the nature of this research project, potential risks to participants may include: 1. **Psychological Discomfort**: Participants may experience psychological discomfort as a result of reflecting on their own feelings through anonymous quizzes or interviews. Discussing feeling may bring up self-consciousness or vulnerability, which could lead to temporary discomfort. Participants will be reminded that they may skip any questions that make them uncomfortable. 2. **Confidentiality Concerns**: Although every effort will be made to ensure data confidentiality, there is a minor risk of data breaches that could potentially compromise participants' personal information. To minimize this risk, all data will be anonymized, and a unique code will be used in place of identifying information. 3. **Time Commitment**: Participation in this project may require some time investment, which could cause inconvenience or mild stress for participants, especially those with busy schedules. Efforts will be made to keep each activity as concise as possible to respect participants' time. *(this box should expand as you type)*		*How you will mitigate the risk to participants:* To address the potential risks identified in this study, the following mitigation strategies will be implemented: 1. **Mitigating Psychological Discomfort**: ○ Participants will be informed of the sensitive nature of the questions about their feelings and will be reminded that they may skip any questions that cause discomfort. ○ A debriefing statement will be provided at the end of the study, offering resources for managing strong emotions, along with contacts for support if participants feel affected by the content. 2. **Ensuring Confidentiality**: ○ All data will be anonymized at the point of collection, with participants assigned unique codes to replace any identifying information. ○ Data will be stored securely on encrypted devices, accessible only to the principal researcher, to minimize the risk of breaches. ○ Participants will be fully briefed on data protection measures during the consent process, ensuring transparency and trust. 3. **Reducing Time Commitment Stress**:

		○ The study activities, including questionnaires and interviews, will be designed to be concise, minimizing the time required for each participant. ○ Scheduling will remain flexible, allowing participants to choose times that are convenient for them to reduce any undue stress or time pressure. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	(this box should expand as you type)	
4	**Risks to the investigator** For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: **Data Mismanagement**: Improper collection, storage, or handling of sensitive data could lead to data breaches, impacting confidentiality and potentially jeopardizing the project's integrity. Proper data management protocols will be followed, including secure storage and systematic organization of data. **Emotional Impact**: Engaging with participants' reflections on their emotions may create an emotional toll, particularly if sensitive topics arise during interviews or anonymous feedback. To mitigate this, I will set boundaries for work hours and consider debriefing or reflective practices to manage emotional impact. **Physical Health Risks**: Conducting interviews, analyzing data, and extensive screen time could lead to fatigue, eye strain, or repetitive strain injuries. Regular breaks, ergonomic workspace adjustments, and time management techniques will be used to reduce these risks. **Ethical Breaches**: There is a risk of unintentional ethical breaches, such as improper	*How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:* **Data Mismanagement**: ● To minimize the risk of data mismanagement, I will undertake a refresher course on research ethics and data handling, ensuring compliance with best practices. ● All data will be stored on secure, encrypted systems with restricted access, accessible only to the investigator, reducing the potential for unauthorized access. **Emotional Impact**: ● To address potential emotional stress from engaging with sensitive participant reflections on their emotions, I will set clear boundaries around work hours and practice self-care routines, such as debriefing or engaging in stress-relief activities.

	anonymization or incomplete informed consent. I will review ethical protocols regularly to ensure all procedures are followed rigorously and seek guidance if ethical questions arise. **Time Management**: Balancing this research project with other responsibilities may lead to stress and workload management issues. A structured project timeline with clear milestones and regular progress assessments will help to manage time effectively and reduce stress. *(this box should expand as you type)*	• Access to peer support or professional supervision will be available if challenging emotional responses arise. **Physical Health Risks**: • Regular breaks, ergonomic adjustments to the workspace, and balanced work hours will be implemented to manage screen time and reduce strain. • Exercise and mindfulness practices will be incorporated as part of a daily routine to promote overall health and prevent fatigue. **Ethical Breaches**: • I will strictly adhere to institutional ethical guidelines and consult regularly with an ethics advisor to prevent any accidental breaches, ensuring proper anonymization and informed consent. • Regular checks will be scheduled throughout the project to verify that all ethical protocols are fully implemented. **Time Management**: • A detailed and adaptable timeline will be created for the project, with clear milestones and deadlines to balance the research project with other responsibilities. • Regular progress reviews will allow for adjustments to the timeline, ensuring manageable workloads and reducing potential stress. *(this box should expand as you type)*
5	**University/institutional risks** For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Adverse Publicity: If the research project is perceived as poorly managed, unethical, or if it leads to participant harm, it can cause negative publicity for	*How you will mitigate the risk to the University:* 1. Adverse Publicity: Ensure that the research project adheres to all ethical standards and guidelines, that participant wellbeing is prioritized, and that any issues are addressed

	the university. 2. Data Protection Breaches: If participant data is not properly managed and secured, it could lead to a data breach, violating both ethical standards and possibly legal data protection regulations. 3. Academic Reputation: If the research is not conducted rigorously, ethically, and effectively, it could potentially damage the academic reputation of the university. *(this box should expand as you type)*	swiftly and transparently to avoid adverse publicity. 2. Data Protection Breaches: Implementing strong data protection protocols, including encryption and limited access rights, can help prevent breaches. Regular data protection training for the investigator can also reduce the risk. 3. Academic Reputation: Maintaining a high standard of academic rigor, including thorough data analysis, peer-review processes, and regular progress reporting can help uphold the university's academic reputation. *(this box should expand as you type)*
6	**Environmental risks** For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: This study will not have environmental risks. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to environment:* *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☐	X
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	**Feedback** What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	1. **Optional Information Session**: At the conclusion of the study, participants will have the opportunity to attend an information session if they wish to learn more about the research. This session can be conducted in-person or via a secure online platform, based on each participant's preference. During the session, I will discuss the study's goals, methods, and preliminary findings and answer any questions participants may have. This optional session is intended to increase transparency and provide interested participants with a deeper understanding of the research process. 2. **Feedback on Findings**: Once data collection and analysis are complete, participants will receive a summary of the study's overall results. This summary will be prepared in a user-friendly format, highlighting key findings and their potential implications. Feedback will

	be shared via email or physical mail, depending on each participant's preferred communication method. This will likely be provided a few months after the study concludes. 3. **Open Communication**: Participants will be encouraged to reach out to the researcher with any additional questions or concerns after the study has ended. This maintains an open line of communication and reinforces a respectful and supportive research environment. Throughout the debriefing and feedback processes, all communications will be designed to protect confidentiality and adhere to data protection standards, ensuring that participants' privacy and personal data are fully safeguarded. *(this box should expand as you type)*
2	**Informed consent** Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Information Provision: Prior to the study, all potential participants will receive a comprehensive information pack, either in physical or digital format, based on their preference. This pack will include clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, participants' rights (including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty), and details on how their data will be collected, used, and protected. Contact information for the research team will also be provided for any questions or concerns. **In all cases, participants will be given ample time to review the information and ask any questions before they are asked to provide their consent.** **Consent Forms**: Participants will be asked to provide written consent by signing a consent form. For in-person interactions, physical forms will be used, while digital forms will be provided for remote interactions. The forms will reiterate key information about the study and include a statement confirming that by signing, participants indicate their voluntary agreement to participate. **Online Questionnaire**: If online questionnaires are used, the first page will serve as a digital consent form. This page will include similar information as the physical/digital form, with a statement clarifying that by clicking "Next," participants consent to participate. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	**Confidentiality / Anonymity** Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All consent forms, whether physical or digital, will be treated as personal data in line with data protection legislation and stored securely, with access limited to the researcher. *(this box should expand as you type)*

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	**YES**	**NO**
1	***"Personal data"*** *means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.*	X	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	Yes, this research project will involve the collection and processing of personal data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). The personal data to be collected includes: 1. **Identifying Information**: Participants' names and contact details will be gathered through consent forms to establish participant identity, facilitate communication, and ensure informed consent. 2. **Interview Audio Recordings**: Audio recordings of some interviews may be made to allow the researcher to re-listen to responses for accuracy and analysis. These recordings are intended solely for the researcher's use to aid in data analysis and will not be shared publicly. 3. **Digital Identifiers**: If participants opt to fill out the consent forms online, their email addresses will be collected for digital communication and consent confirmation. Identifying information and contact details are necessary for effective communication, record-keeping, and obtaining informed consent. Interview recordings, where applicable, will serve as a supplementary data source for accurate analysis, and email addresses will facilitate digital consent and communication. All personal data will be handled with strict confidentiality. Identifying details will be replaced with unique codes in any transcripts or data analysis to ensure participant anonymity. Data protection protocols—including secure storage, restricted access, and encryption—will be implemented to safeguard participants' privacy and rights. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	**YES**	**NO**
3	***"Special category data"*** *means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –* *(a) racial or ethnic origin,* *(b) political opinions,* *(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,* *(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),* *(e) physical or mental health or condition,* *(f) sexual life,* *(g) genetics,* *(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),*	☐	X
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		

4	*(this box should expand as you type)*

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	**YES**	**NO**
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	X
6	University computers?	☐	X
7	Private company computers?	☐	X
8	Home or other personal computers?	X	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	X
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	X	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☐
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		

The research project will incorporate a range of security measures to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and security of all collected data, in compliance with the GDPR and DPA. These measures include:

1. **Encryption and Password Protection**: All digital data, including scanned consent forms, interview recordings, and the list of unique participant identifiers, will be securely stored on an encrypted and password-protected personal laptop.
2. **Secure Cloud Backup**: To prevent data loss and unauthorized access, all data will be backed up on a password-protected cloud storage system, ensuring an additional layer of security.
3. **Anonymization and Pseudonymization**: To maintain participant confidentiality, all personally identifiable information will be replaced with unique identifiers. This pseudonymization process ensures participants cannot be directly identified from the research data, enhancing their privacy. The list linking these identifiers to participants' actual identities will be securely stored in a separate, password-protected folder.
4. **Paper Document Management**: Any physical consent forms will be scanned into a secure digital format and then immediately shredded to prevent any unauthorized access to paper documents.
5. **Access Controls**: Access to all data will be restricted to the principal researcher only, ensuring that no unauthorized personnel can view or manipulate the data.

By implementing these measures, I aim to uphold the highest standards of data security and confidentiality, protecting all participant information throughout this research project and beyond.

(this box should expand as you type)

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	**YES**	**NO**
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	X	☐

14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	X
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	X
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	X	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	X	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	X
19	Use of data management system?	☐	X
20	Data archiving?	X	
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Yes, the research activity will involve data-related processes that warrant special attention, including electronic data transfer, data export and import between the EU/UK and the USA, and the use of personal contact information. 1. **Electronic Data Transfer**: All electronic data transfers will be conducted securely through encrypted connections. This applies to all data forms, including drafts, experimental results, survey data, and other research materials, ensuring protection against unauthorized access during transfer. 2. **Export/Import of Data**: Due to the nature of this project, data will be exported from the UK (EU) to the USA and imported from the USA to the UK. These transfers will occur securely, with data fully encrypted during transit to safeguard against unauthorized access. All international data transfers will comply with GDPR and DPA requirements, as well as any applicable international data protection regulations. 3. **Use of Personal Contact Information**: Personal contact details, such as email addresses, will be used solely for research-related communication, such as obtaining informed consent and discussing research procedures or outcomes. Contact information will be stored securely, and access will be limited to the principal researcher. 4. **Data Retention and Deletion**: All personal and research data will be retained securely until the completion of the project, after which it will be permanently deleted. However, in compliance with the DPA 2018 and GDPR, participants have the right to access their personal data at any time. Information about these rights, including the ability to request data access or deletion, will be included in the consent forms. Upon request, participants will be given access to their data and, if requested, it will be deleted promptly and excluded from the research project. These measures form a robust data management strategy, ensuring participants' rights are respected, privacy standards are upheld, and data protection regulations are fully complied with throughout the research process. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		

	The data generated through this research activity will be accessible exclusively to the following individuals, in line with our strict data access and confidentiality policies: 1. **Christa Durand**: As the principal investigator of this study, I will be the primary individual accessing the research data. This access is essential to effectively analyze the data and draw meaningful conclusions for the study. I am responsible for data management and ensuring compliance with all relevant data protection protocols. 2. **Dr. David Cane**: As my academic advisor for the Master's Program at the Voice Study Center, Dr. Cane may be granted access to specific portions of the research data necessary for offering expert guidance on data interpretation and analysis. His access will be strictly limited to data pertinent to his advisory role, and he will adhere to all confidentiality and data protection requirements. Access rights are limited based on each individual's role within the research project, with both individuals committed to upholding data protection and confidentiality protocols as stipulated by GDPR, DPA, and institutional guidelines. Strict access controls will be enforced, and any data shared for advisory purposes will be limited to non-identifiable formats where possible, further ensuring participant confidentiality. *(this box should expand as you type)*
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:
	Christa Durand: As the principal investigator of this study, I will be the primary individual accessing the research data. *(this box should expand as you type)*
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.
	Data Storage Locations: All data will be stored electronically in two primary locations: a secured private laptop owned by me, the principal investigator, and a password-protected cloud storage system. Cloud storage will provide data redundancy, protecting against potential data loss due to hardware malfunctions. **Data Security Measures**: To ensure robust data protection, multiple layers of security will be applied. All stored data will be encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. The laptop and cloud storage system will be password-protected, with passwords accessible only to the principal investigator and, when necessary, the Master's Program advisor. Additionally, access controls will be periodically reviewed to ensure ongoing compliance with data security standards. **Data Storage Duration and Format**: Data will be retained in its original digital format for the duration of the study, remaining intact and unaltered. Upon project completion, data will be securely deleted following data protection guidelines. **Use of Removable Storage Devices**: If removable storage devices (e.g., USB drives) are used for data transfer or temporary storage, these devices will be password-protected. After the study

	concludes, any such devices will be securely reformatted to permanently erase stored data, further ensuring data security. **Data Archival**: In line with typical procedures for Master's level research, it is not anticipated that the data will need to be archived post-study. Therefore, all data will be securely deleted upon project completion, in full compliance with GDPR and DPA guidelines. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. (*Most relevant to academic staff)*		
	NO *(this box should expand as you type)*		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	**YES**	X
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	**YES**	X

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

PG2 / E1 FORM

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants**.** In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	**Signature of applicant:**		**Date: 1/11/24**

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Laura James	**Date:**
3	Signature:	Laura James	**27.1.25**

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		**Date:**
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

X	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
X	I have completed **ALL RELEVANT** sections of the form in full.
X	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (**where appropriate**)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) *ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE **ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT***
X	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
X	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY
Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY
All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix B: Permission Letter

Christa Durand
7501 Derby Lane
Cotati, CA 94931
ChristaDurand@gmail.com
1 November 2024

Dear UWTSD,

Re: From Affect to Artistry: Understanding Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into 'From Affect to Artistry: Understanding Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role' to be carried out by Christa Durand, Owner of Music to My Ears, during the Module 6 program between January 2025 and October 2025. This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review, observations, interviews, and anonymous feedback to explore how voice instructors manage student anxiety. Observations of lessons will focus on real-time techniques such as vocal exercises, breathing practices, and body alignment for anxiety reduction. Interviews and group discussions with instructors and students will provide in-depth perspectives on effective strategies and personal experiences with anxiety management in lessons. Anonymous surveys will offer candid feedback on coping strategies and the perceived role of anxiety management, promoting honest responses. Participants will include 5 to 12 adult students and professional voice instructors, ensuring a diverse range of experiences and insights. Ethical measures will be strictly followed, with informed consent, data anonymization, and secure storage to protect participant privacy.

Kind Regards,



Christa Durand

Appendix C: Anonymous Questionnaire Invitation, Permission, and Consent

Research Project Title: From Affect to Artistry: Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role in Supporting Artistic Resilience and Expression

Investigator: Christa Durand
Contact Information:
Email: ChristaDurand@gmail.com
Phone: 707-480-5889

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to take part in an anonymous online questionnaire exploring how strong emotions affect singers and how voice instructors address emotional challenges in their teaching. **Your responses will remain completely anonymous, and no personally identifying information will be collected.**

Before you decide whether to participate, please take the time to read this information carefully. If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher at any time.

Purpose of the Research

This study explores how strong emotions—such as tension, fear, self-doubt, and anxiety—affect singers and how voice teachers help students navigate these emotions. The research aims to:

- Investigate how emotions influence vocal performance.
- Explore how voice instructors identify and address emotional challenges in lessons.
- Examine strategies teachers use to help singers manage performance anxiety.

Your participation will help contribute to a better understanding of how emotional factors impact vocal training and performance.

Why You Were Chosen

You have been invited to participate because you are either a **singer** or a **voice instructor**. Participants must be **over the age of 18** to take part in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely **voluntary**. You may choose not to participate, and if you decide to begin the questionnaire but wish to stop at any time, you are free to do so **without penalty**. Since the questionnaire is anonymous, **once your responses are submitted, they cannot be withdrawn.**

What Participation Involves

If you choose to participate, you will complete an **anonymous online questionnaire** about your experiences with emotional responses in singing and teaching.

- The questionnaire will take approximately **15-20 minutes** to complete.
- All responses are **completely anonymous**—no personal information (such as your name, email, or IP address) will be collected.

Potential Risks and Benefits

- There are **no anticipated risks** associated with this study. However, if reflecting on performance anxiety or emotional challenges causes any discomfort, you may choose to skip any question or stop the questionnaire at any time.
- While there are **no direct benefits** for participating, your insights will contribute to a valuable resource for **voice teachers and singers**, helping to improve strategies for managing emotional responses in vocal performance.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

- **This questionnaire is fully anonymous.** No names, email addresses, or any identifying details will be collected.
- All data will be stored securely and analyzed only by the researcher.
- Anonymous questionnaire responses will be retained until **February 2028** for potential use in follow-up research or academic publications.
- Once submitted, **questionnaire responses cannot be withdrawn**, as there is no way to link them to individual participants.

Use of Data and Sharing of Findings

The data collected in this questionnaire will be used **exclusively for research purposes**. This includes:

- **Analysis for this master's research project at UWTSD.**
- **Academic publications or conference presentations**, ensuring all data remains fully anonymous.
- **Educational discussions within voice pedagogy forums** to enhance knowledge on managing emotions in vocal training.

If you would like to receive a summary of the study's findings, you may contact the researcher at any time.

Ethical Approval

This study has been approved by the **University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) Research Ethics Committee**. If you have concerns about the ethical aspects of this study, you may contact the committee directly.

University Contact Information:

University of Wales Trinity Saint David
+44 1570 422351
Voice Study Centre: info@voicestudycentre.com
The Old Stables, The Gattinetts, Hadleigh Road,
East Bergholt, Suffolk CO76QT, United Kingdom

Contact Information for Further Questions

If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact:

Christa Durand
Email: ChristaDurand@gmail.com
Phone: 707-480-5889

Thank you for considering participation in this research!

Consent Statement

By clicking "I Agree" and proceeding with the questionnaire, you confirm that:

*You have read and understood the information provided above.

*You are over the age of 18 and voluntarily agree to participate.

*You understand that your participation is anonymous and that once submitted, your responses cannot be withdrawn.

*You understand that your data will be used only for research purposes and will remain confidential.

If you agree, please proceed to the questionnaire.

Appendix D: Anonymous Questionnaire Questions

Link to Google Form: https://forms.gle/RWLD5VEYE4C49yyu6

Demographics

What is your age in years?

How many years of singing experience do you have?

If you teach voice, how many years of teaching experience do you have?

Primary Singing Style(s) - Please select all styles that apply

- Classical
  Musical Theater
- Pop
- Rock
- Folk
- Jazz
- Country
- Other

If "other", would you care to elaborate?

If you are also a teacher please select the Primary Singing Style(s) that you teach - Please select all styles that apply

- Classical
- Musical Theater
- Pop
- Rock
- Folk
- Jazz
- Country

- Other

If "other", would you care to elaborate?

Have you taken voice lessons in a studio with a voice teacher?

- Never
- Yes, but I don't currently take lessons
- Yes, currently

If you are currently taking lessons, how often do you see your teacher?

- Weekly
- Twice a Month
- Monthly
- A few times a year

Have you performed in front of an audience?

- No
- Yes

Describe how frequently you perform in front of audiences and what kind of audiences they are. (Examples, in concert halls, at open mic nights, only for friends, etc...)

Emotional Challenges in Voice Lessons

Have you experienced emotions that have interfered with your vocal development or ability to perform?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Briefly describe how strong emotions have impacted your ability to sing during lessons or performances.

How frequently do emotions interfere with your ability to focus or progress in voice lessons?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Teachers' Approaches to Emotional Challenges

How have your teachers addressed emotions in the studio?

To what extent have your voice teachers acknowledged or addressed emotional challenges in lessons?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Has your teacher ever used any of the following techniques to help you navigate emotional challenges? (Select all that apply)

- Mindfulness or grounding techniques
- Adjusting vocal exercises to accommodate emotional state
- offering empathetic listening and discussion
- Using breath exercises for relaxation
- Suggesting movement or body alignment exercises
- Encouraging journaling or self-reflection
- Recommending professional therapy
- Other

If you selected "Other" in the previous question or would like to share more details, please do so here. I'd love to hear about specific techniques your teacher has used to help you manage emotional challenges in singing and how they have influenced your experience.

How effective have your teacher's approaches been in helping you manage emotional challenges in your singing?

- Not effective at all
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Extremely effective

If your teacher has used Any of the following techniques, how helpful did you find them? 1 = most effective, 5 = least effective (leave blank if you have not experienced these techniques)

- Mindfulness or grounding techniques
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Adjusting vocal exercises to accommodate emotional state
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Using breathing exercises for relaxation
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Offering empathetic listening and discussion
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Suggesting movement or body alignment exercises
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Encouraging journaling of self reflection
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Recommending therapy
  1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Have you ever had a voice teacher who was ineffective or unhelpful in addressing emotional challenges?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which of the following did you find unhelpful or ineffective? (Select all that apply.)

- Dismissing emotional concerns entirely
  Ignoring visible signs of emotional distress
- Encouraging a ‘push through it’ mentality
- Over-emphasizing emotional issues rather than working on solutions
- Focusing only on technical adjustments without acknowledging emotions
- Other

If you selected "other" would you like to write a few words about what happened?

How important is it to you that voice teachers acknowledge and help manage emotional challenges in lessons?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

What types of emotional support would you find most beneficial in your voice lessons? (Select up to three.)

- More open discussion about emotions and singing
- Practical exercises to ease emotional tension
- Mindfulness or stress-reduction techniques
- A safe space where I don’t feel judged for emotional struggles
- More awareness from teachers about emotional barriers to singing
- Other

If you answered "other" would you like to elaborate?

Specific Questions for Those Who Teach Voice

If you do not currently teach voice or have never taught voice you can skip to the end of the questionnaire.

Primary Teaching Focus

- Private voice lessons
- Group singing classes
- Choir direction
- Musical theater coaching
- Other

If you answered "other" would you like to elaborate?

Do you hold formal training in voice pedagogy or vocal performance? (Select all that apply.)
☐ Yes, a BA degree in vocal performance/pedagogy
☐ Yes, a MA degree in vocal performance/pedagogy
☐ Yes, a PhD in vocal performance/pedagogy
☐ Yes, certifications but no formal degree
☐ No formal training, but significant performing and teaching experience

Have you received training in psychology, counseling, or emotional wellness techniques? (Select all that apply.)
☐ Yes, some formal education in psychology/counseling
☐ Yes, extensive formal education in psychology/counseling
☐ Yes, workshops or continuing education on emotional wellness in music
☐ No, but I have studied these topics independently
☐ No, I have not received training in this area

Would you like to elaborate on what types of degrees or training you have in psychology, counseling, or emotional wellness techniques?

How often do you encounter students struggling with emotional challenges in your studio?

- Rarely (less than 10% of students)
- Occasionally (about 25% of students)
- Regularly (about 50% of students)
- Frequently (75% or more of students)

To what extent do you consider emotions when working with students in your studio?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

How much do you believe emotional challenges impact a singer's technique or performance?

- Not at all
- Slightly
  Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

Which of the following strategies do you currently use to help students navigate emotional challenges?

- Encouraging mindfulness or grounding techniques
- Adjusting vocal exercises based on emotional state
- Offering empathetic listening and discussion
- Using breathing exercises for relaxation
- Incorporating movement or body alignment techniques
- Encouraging journaling or self-reflection
- Recommending professional therapy
- Other

If you selected 'other" would you like to elaborate?

How effective do you believe your current strategies are in helping students manage emotional challenges?

- Not effective at all
- Slightly effective
- Moderately effective
- Very effective
- Extremely effective

Are there areas related to emotional well-being in vocal instruction that you wish you understood better?

- No, I feel well-informed
- Yes, I would like more knowledge in: (Select all that apply)
  - ☐ Recognizing emotional distress in students
  - ☐ Strategies for helping students manage performance anxiety
  - ☐ Understanding the psychological aspects of singing and performance
  - ☐ Setting healthy emotional boundaries in the studio
  - ☐ Other

If you chose "other" would you like to elaborate?

How clear are you on the boundary between being a voice teacher and providing emotional support versus therapy?

- Very unclear
- Somewhat unclear
- Neutral
- Somewhat clear
- Very clear

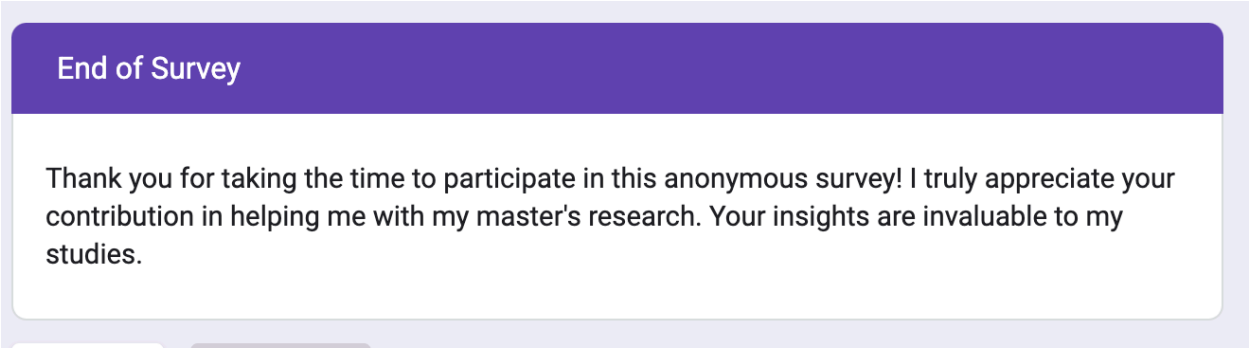
Have you ever recommended that a student seek professional therapy for emotional challenges affecting their singing?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what prompted you to suggest professional therapy?

- Persistent emotional distress affecting their singing
- Signs of severe anxiety or depression
- Inability to focus or engage due to emotional struggles
- Student requested guidance on managing emotions outside of singing
- Other

If you chose "other" would you like to elaborate?



Appendix E: Questionnaire Responses

Findings: Anonymous Questionnaire Responses

Introduction to Anonymous Questionnaire Findings

This section presents findings from the anonymous questionnaire completed by 30 participants, exploring experiences and perspectives on emotional challenges in singing and the role of teachers in supporting emotional well-being within the studio. The analysis employed a descriptive qualitative approach (Sandelowski, 2000), using descriptive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to code and categorize open-ended responses while retaining participant language and nuance. Additionally, basic descriptive statistical analysis was applied to categorical and Likert-scale data to summarize frequencies and patterns within participant responses (Field, 2024). This approach allowed for the systematic organization of data while prioritizing a theme-driven narrative that reflects the lived experiences of participants without imposing heavy interpretive claims.

The findings below are organized to illuminate the key emotional challenges identified by participants, the strategies currently used in voice studios, and the perceived effectiveness and limitations of these strategies from both student and teacher perspectives.

Participant Demographics

To explore how emotional well-being intersects with vocal pedagogy, I developed and distributed an anonymous questionnaire completed by 30 participants across a range of ages (18–81, with the majority between 30–60). The questionnaire investigated whether voice students feel their teachers have sufficient tools for addressing emotional challenges in the studio, and whether teachers feel equipped to support students experiencing emotional blocks in singing.

Of the respondents, 14 identified as voice teachers, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 36 years (the modal range being 12–15 years). All respondents had performance experience, and aside from two individuals, all had taken private voice lessons. This provided a relevant participant pool with direct insight into the emotional realities of singing and teaching.

Emotional Interference in Singing

All participants reported experiencing strong emotions that affected their singing. Common emotional states included anxiety, fear of judgment, depression, grief, frustration, imposter syndrome, stage fright, overwhelm, and trauma-related responses. These emotional states often manifested physically through breath control difficulties, muscle tension, shakiness, and disrupted cognitive processing, aligning with findings that affective states directly influence physiological function during singing (Kenny, 2011; Helding, 2020). Respondents also highlighted the impact of emotional states on concentration, memory, and expressivity.

Several participants noted teacher-student dynamics as a significant factor in emotional safety, indicating that dismissiveness or a lack of attunement could exacerbate emotional barriers, while empathetic and supportive teaching relationships could facilitate emotional regulation and progress in singing. Others shared that even positive emotional experiences, such as feeling moved by music, could temporarily disrupt performance, demonstrating the complex and embodied nature of emotional responses in vocal practice (Davidson and Faulkner, 2010).

Frequency of Emotional Interference

While open-ended responses revealed universal experiences of emotional interference, responses to the frequency scale showed variation: some participants reported “never” despite describing interference elsewhere, suggesting potential differences in how individuals interpret the term “interference” or perceive its impact on their singing. Most respondents selected “occasionally” or “sometimes,” while seven reported “often,” and one reported “always.” This pattern aligns with the complexity of emotional experiences, which may fluctuate based on context, repertoire, or performance demands (Welch, 2017).

Teachers’ Acknowledgment of Emotional Challenges

Participants reported varied experiences regarding whether teachers acknowledged emotional challenges in lessons. While one participant noted their teacher addressed emotions “a great deal,” four indicated “not at all,” with the majority indicating “slightly” or “somewhat.” Approximately 30% reported that teachers addressed these challenges “quite a bit,” reflecting variability in teacher responsiveness to emotional states in the studio.

Strategies Used by Teachers

Students identified empathetic listening and discussion, movement and body alignment exercises, breath-based relaxation techniques, and mindfulness or grounding practices as the most frequently used strategies by teachers to support emotional challenges in lessons. These approaches align with trauma-informed and somatic practices discussed in the literature (Carello and Butler, 2015; Imad, 2021). Less commonly, teachers recommended journaling, self-reflection, or professional therapy. Notably, empathetic listening emerged as the central supportive practice, emphasizing the importance of trust, validation, and relational safety in addressing emotional barriers in singing (Carey and Grant, 2015).

When rated for effectiveness, these strategies received moderate to high ratings (means around 3.6–3.9 on a 5-point scale), with movement-based and mindfulness practices emerging as particularly valued by students.

Ineffective Teacher Practices

When asked about ineffective practices, approximately 52% of respondents reported having worked with teachers who were unhelpful in addressing emotional challenges. The most frequently cited issues included teachers focusing solely on technical adjustments without acknowledging emotional contexts, dismissing emotional concerns, ignoring visible distress, and encouraging a “push through it” mentality. A smaller number of respondents noted issues with teachers overemphasizing emotional concerns without practical solutions, indicating that effective support requires balance, attunement, and clarity of scope (Kenny, 2011; Helding, 2020).

Importance of Emotional Support

A strong consensus emerged regarding the importance of addressing emotional issues in lessons, with 26 out of 28 respondents indicating that it was “very” or “extremely important.” This underscores that students value the acknowledgment and integration of emotional awareness as a core component of vocal instruction.

Participants expressed a need for a safe, nonjudgmental space, practical exercises for managing emotional tension, more open discussion about emotional aspects of singing,

teacher awareness of emotional barriers, and mindfulness practices. This reflects a desire for practical, compassionate, and embodied support within the studio environment (Helding, 2020; Welch, 2017).

Teacher Perspectives

Among teachers, responses indicated a diversity of training backgrounds, with roughly equal representation between those with formal vocal pedagogy degrees and those with practical teaching and performance experience. Approximately 25% of teachers reported formal training in emotional wellness or psychology, while others relied on self-directed study or had no formal training.

All teachers reported encountering emotional challenges in their studios, with many noting this occurs frequently and affects a significant proportion of students. Teachers overwhelmingly recognized the significant impact of emotional challenges on vocal technique and performance, with most indicating that emotions play a major role in shaping student progress and artistic freedom (Helding, 2020; Kenny, 2011).

The most commonly used teacher strategies mirrored those valued by students: empathetic listening, mindfulness practices, breath work, movement exercises, and adaptive teaching methods. Teachers rated the effectiveness of these strategies as moderate to high, although several expressed a desire to expand their knowledge and tools for addressing emotional challenges. Areas of interest for further training included strategies for managing performance anxiety, understanding psychological aspects of singing, recognizing emotional distress, and setting appropriate boundaries (Carello and Butler, 2015; SAMHSA, 2014).

Teachers' clarity on boundaries between providing emotional support and engaging in therapy varied, with some expressing confidence in maintaining ethical distinctions, while others indicated uncertainty. This suggests a need for further education and discussion within the voice teaching community regarding ethical, trauma-informed, and emotionally attuned practices that remain within the scope of pedagogy (Carello and Butler, 2015; Helding, 2020).

Thematic Grouping of Participant Quotes

Question: Briefly describe how strong emotions have impacted your ability to sing during lessons or performances.

1. Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright

"I often get shaky and a racing heart before I start singing. If I'm playing my own instrument, those go away almost instantly after I start. If I'm auditioning/there are stakes, I can be nervous and shaky all the way through. I often forget the things I consciously work on during lessons."

"I get really nervous while singing by myself, especially performing... There is a lot of anxiety around not sounding bad, and it makes it harder for me to enjoy singing during a solo or small ensemble performance."

"I have always suffered with varying degrees of MPA."

"Nervousness – doesn't happen too much these days, but it does affect my breath control and ability to sing straight tone well."

"Anxiety has crippled me at times."

"I had horrible stage fright but have learned how to manage."

"Fear and anxiety related to singing have manifested as tension in my throat and breathing, resulting in particular difficulty navigating the passaggio and higher vocal registers."

"Self-doubt, anxiety, uncertainty."

"I struggle with memorization and recall, so often feel anxiety about forgetting words in memorized performances."

"During lesson I often end up feeling frustrated or anxious about how I sound and how it affects my teacher's view of my singing abilities."

"Even during lessons in the past, there has been anxiety over singing by myself that I had to work through over several sessions."

"Any of the following: my chest and throat would tighten; my eyes would tear up; I would gasp involuntarily."

2. Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue

"I struggle with depression and the lack of energy makes it really challenging to fully support my voice."

"I went through a period of depression in 2022–2023 where I could physically sing, but I did not want to. Due to this, I didn't pursue any performance opportunities and rarely practiced."

"Sadness or sentimentality causes me to choke up, making it more difficult to sing."

"Grief, frustration."

"Sadness sometimes chokes me up."

"Stress in life or anxiety over what I'm trying to accomplish musically can make my body tense and impede my vocal techniques."

3. Trauma, CPTSD, and Hypervigilance

"To be completely honest... What strong emotions impacted my ability to sing during lessons or performances? It would be the CPTSD from my childhood, the domestic abusive relationship I was in, along with my anxiety and clinical depression... those scenarios at one point or another personally put my nervous system in a state of what I can best explain as a feeling of 'raw-frazzled-hypervigilance.'"

"I do have to fight ingrained childhood and adolescence habits of wanting to jump to general dissociation when any uncomfortable singing-related situation arises. And that is my current, biggest obstacle."

"Poor teacher fit in undergrad meant sometimes I'd wind up leaving lessons early crying."

4. Physiological Impact of Emotions

"Not able to take proper breaths for air. My leg would shake. Not able to sing as strong."

"Stong emotions impact breathing/breath support. That impacts my ability to relax my throat. That tension impacts my tone, particularly in the upper range."

"Emotions have impacted my breathing and subsequently interfered with my tone/intonation, and ability to sustain long phrases... tension in my body, most notably my tongue... emotions have reduced the quality of my performances to a notable degree."

"Fear, self-doubt, negative thinking, clouded mind."

"Self doubt is always an issue especially when singing high."

"Lack of confidence in my vocal quality."

"When I scream and cry a lot, I worry about how that will affect my voice if I try to sing immediately after."

5. Emotional Disconnect or Mismatch with Material

"I don’t really get affected to the point where it affects my voice, but it can interfere with the emotional aspect, especially if the emotion I’m experiencing is different than the emotion that the character I’m playing is experiencing."

"I experience music deeply and when a piece touches my heart, it makes me emotional in a positive way. It makes me excited and want to communicate... but can make communication challenging. Tears... have made it challenging to sing, but they’re tears out of fulfillment."

"Alternatively, if I strongly dislike a piece, there is a similar communication challenge out of frustration."

6. General Emotional Overload or Accumulated Stress

"Anxiety, imposter syndrome, fear, frustration, anger, helplessness, loss."

"To be completely honest... I have noticed that there have been many things that have impacted my ability to sing during lessons or performances, or even process the full capacity of what is being asked of me."

"There is a lot of anxiety around not sounding bad... I have worked with my therapist around the idea that one of my parents expecting perfection of me growing up... is part of my performance and singing anxiety."

Emotional Support Needs in Voice Lessons

Participants were asked to identify the types of emotional support they would find most beneficial in their voice lessons. Their responses reflected a strong desire for teachers to address emotional well-being with care, practical tools, and nonjudgmental presence.

Across responses, five recurring support strategies emerged most frequently:

- More open discussion about emotions and singing
- Practical exercises to ease emotional tension
- A safe space where I don’t feel judged for emotional struggles
- More awareness from teachers about emotional barriers to singing
- Mindfulness or stress-reduction techniques

These selections point to a student-centered, emotionally informed pedagogical approach where relational safety and practical support coexist. Many respondents selected all five options, highlighting a multifaceted need rather than a single intervention.

Several patterns were especially notable:

- Nearly all participants included “a safe space where I don’t feel judged”, emphasizing the foundational importance of emotional safety.

- Practical exercises were frequently requested, suggesting that students value hands-on, embodied tools to navigate emotional blocks.

- Teacher awareness and emotional literacy were seen as essential—many participants expressed that emotional barriers often go unacknowledged or under-addressed.

- Open discussion and mindfulness were seen not only as coping strategies but also as pathways to deeper musical engagement and personal growth.

Theme	Participant Quote
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	I often get shaky and a racing heart before I start singing...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	I get really nervous while singing by myself...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	I have always suffered with varying degrees of MPA.
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Nervousness – doesn’t happen too much these days...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Anxiety has crippled me at times.
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	I had horrible stage fright but have learned how to manage.
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Fear and anxiety... resulted in particular difficulty navigating the passaggio...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Self-doubt, anxiety, uncertainty.
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	I struggle with memorization and recall...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	During lesson I often end up feeling frustrated or anxious...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Even during lessons in the past, there has been anxiety over singing by myself...
Anxiety, Performance Pressure, and Stage Fright	Any of the following: my chest and throat would tighten...
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	I struggle with depression and the lack of energy...
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	I went through a period of depression in 2022–2023...
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	Sadness or sentimentality causes me to choke up...
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	Grief, frustration.
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	Sadness sometimes chokes me up.
Depression, Grief, and Emotional Fatigue	Stress in life or anxiety over what I’m trying to accomplish...
Trauma, CPTSD, and Hypervigilance	What strong emotions impacted my ability to sing... CPTSD, abusive relationship...
Trauma, CPTSD, and Hypervigilance	Poor teacher fit in undergrad meant sometimes I'd wind up leaving lessons early crying.
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Not able to take proper breaths for air...
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Stong emotions impact breathing/breath support...
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Emotions have impacted my breathing and subsequently interfered...
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Fear, self-doubt, negative thinking, clouded mind.
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Self doubt is always an issue especially when singing high.
Physiological Impact of Emotions	Lack of confidence in my vocal quality.
Physiological Impact of Emotions	When I scream and cry a lot...
Emotional Disconnect or Mismatch with Material	I don’t really get affected... but it can interfere with the emotional aspect...
Emotional Disconnect or Mismatch with Material	I experience music deeply... tears out of fulfillment.
Emotional Disconnect or Mismatch with Material	If I strongly dislike a piece, there is a similar communication challenge...
General Emotional Overload or Accumulated Stress	Anxiety, imposter syndrome, fear, frustration, anger, helplessness, loss.
General Emotional Overload or Accumulated Stress	Many things... impacted my ability to sing or even process what's being asked...
General Emotional Overload or Accumulated Stress	One of my parents expecting perfection... part of my performance and singing anxiety.

Question: What types of emotional support would you find most beneficial in your voice lessons?

1. Frequency Analysis

Out of 27 responses, participants were allowed to choose multiple support strategies. The most frequently selected were:

- A safe space where I don't feel judged for emotional struggles (22 mentions)
- Practical exercises to ease emotional tension (20 mentions)
- More open discussion about emotions and singing (18 mentions)
- More awareness from teachers about emotional barriers to singing (17 mentions)
- Mindfulness or stress-reduction techniques (12 mentions)
- Other (2 mentions)

It seems that the top priorities for participants were having a safe, nonjudgmental studio environment and having access to practical, tangible strategies..

2. Thematic Co-Occurrence Patterns

These patterns reflect how often certain themes were selected together, showing deeper insight into participant preferences.

"Safe space" + "Practical exercises":
This was the most common combination. Participants want emotional support and effective tools.

"Mindfulness" is always paired with other supports:
Mindfulness was rarely chosen on its own. It appeared in responses that also included practical exercises, a safe space, or teacher awareness. This suggests that students view mindfulness not as a standalone solution, but as something best integrated into a larger framework.

"Open discussion" + "Teacher awareness":
These two often appeared together, indicating that students don't just want to be able to talk about emotions, they want their teachers to recognize and respond to them with skill and empathy.

Many participants selected four or more strategies. This points to the complexity of their emotional experiences and a need for layered, multifaceted support rather than a single approach.

3. Summary of Student Needs by Support Type

Safe space:
Students need environments where they can express emotional vulnerability without fear of judgment.

Practical exercises:
There is a strong desire for specific, actionable techniques to manage emotional tension during singing.

Open discussion:

Students want to be able to talk about their emotional states openly during lessons and performances.

Teacher awareness:
There's an expectation that teachers are not only emotionally receptive but trained or informed enough to respond appropriately.

Mindfulness/stress reduction:
Students are receptive to body-based and breath-based practices, but only when they are meaningfully integrated into an overall pedagogical approach.

Support Theme	Frequency
A safe space where I don’t feel judged for emotional struggles	22
Practical exercises to ease emotional tension	20
More open discussion about emotions and singing	18
More awareness from teachers about emotional barriers to singing	17
Mindfulness or stress-reduction techniques	12
Other	2

Appendix F: Quantitative Data Analysis

To complement the qualitative findings, a small set of quantitative questions was included in the questionnaire and analyzed using the statistical software Jamovi (jamovi, no date). I was particularly interested in exploring whether generational differences or years of teaching experience influenced teachers' perspectives on emotional considerations in voice instruction.

Two key questions were selected for this analysis:

1. To what extent do you consider emotions when working with students in your studio?

2. How much do you believe emotional challenges impact a singer's technique or performance?

Using respondents' self-reported age and years of teaching experience, I created scatterplots to visualize potential correlations between these demographic factors and their responses to the above questions.

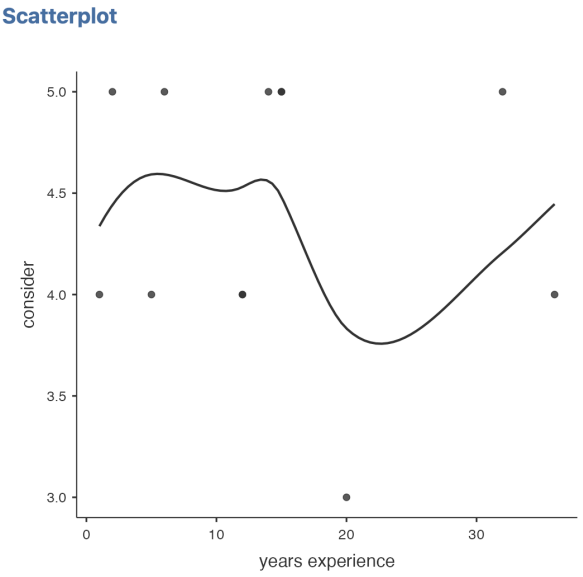
I hypothesized that generational patterns might emerge, perhaps suggesting either a declining emphasis on emotional well-being among younger teachers (which could point to a gap in training), or alternatively, an encouraging shift toward greater emotional awareness among newer generations, reflecting changes in pedagogy and professional culture.

However, the results showed no clear correlation between age or years of teaching experience and the degree to which participants acknowledged the importance of emotions in their teaching. The scatterplots revealed widely distributed responses across age groups and levels of experience, indicating that beliefs about emotional impact are not predictably tied to generational identity or length of professional practice in this sample.

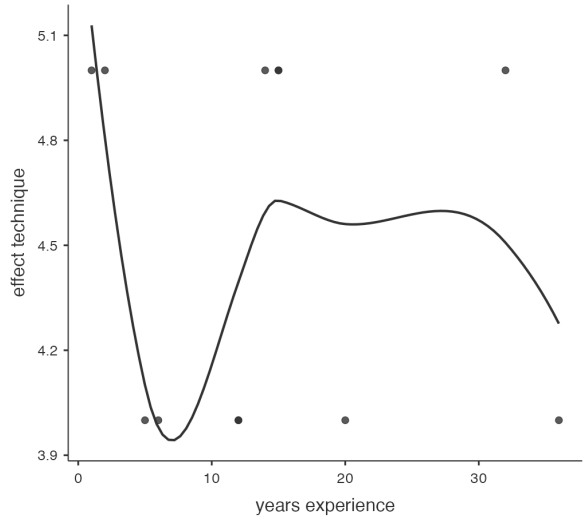
I decided to use a scatterplot to map the relationship between teacher age and how they handle emotions, as well as their years of teaching experience and how they handle emotions, because scatterplots are a good way to visually show how two continuous variables relate to each other. They help you spot trends, patterns, or even outliers that might not be obvious from just looking at numbers (Field, 2024; Dancey and Reidy, 2017). If

the dots tend to move together in a certain direction, that usually means there's some kind of relationship, positive, negative, or none at all (Howell, 2012). Scatterplots are especially helpful when you're trying to see if a linear correlation exists before running more formal statistical tests like Pearson's *r* (Pallant, 2020).

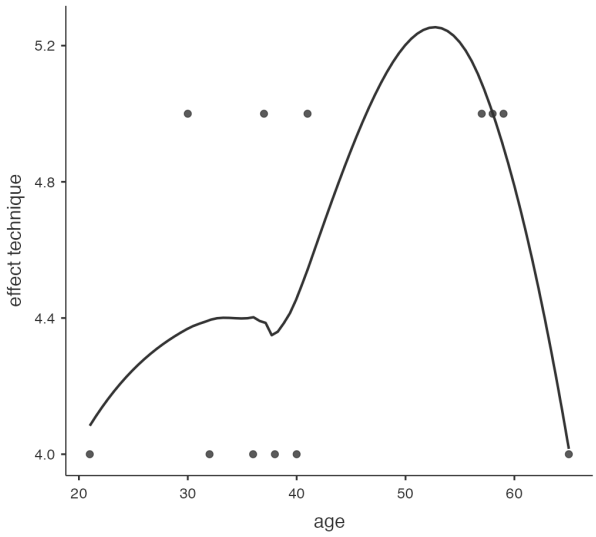
I didn't end up using scatterplots for my other questions, like whether genre or education level affected emotional awareness, because those involved categorical variables, which don't work well with this kind of graph (Gravetter and Forzano, 2018). For those, correlation coefficients seemed like a better fit.

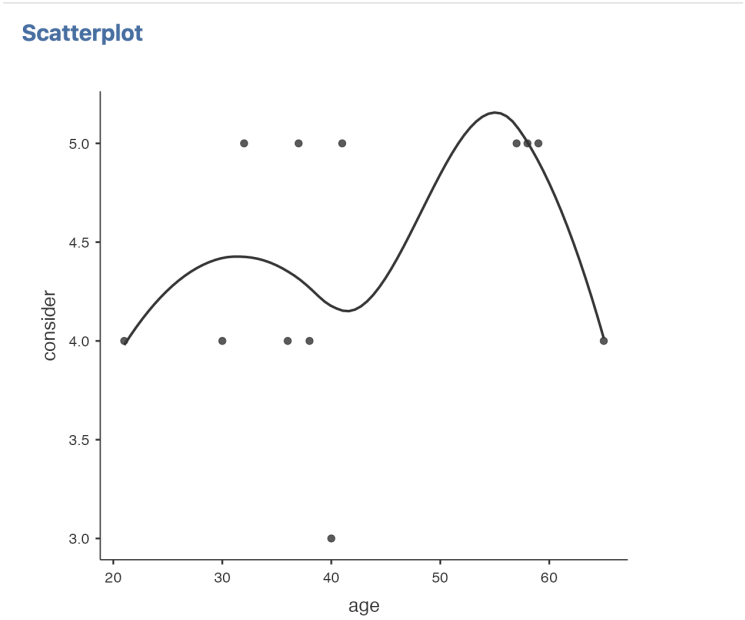


Scatterplot



Scatterplot





These findings suggest that emotional awareness in teaching may be more strongly shaped by individual values, training, or lived experience rather than demographic trends. Further research with a larger sample may be necessary to investigate this question in more depth.

I re-examined these questions using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), a statistical method used to measure the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables (Field, 2024). Specifically, I explored:

- Whether younger or older teachers are more likely to prioritize emotion-informed pedagogy
- Whether teachers with more or less teaching experience are more likely to do so

In both cases, the correlation coefficients were below 0.3, which is considered a weak correlation. The strength of Pearson's *r* can be interpreted according to conventional thresholds: values between 0.1 and 0.3 indicate a weak correlation, 0.3 to 0.5 indicate a moderate correlation, and values above 0.5 are considered strong correlations (Cohen, 1988). Negative values indicate an inverse relationship, while positive values indicate a direct one.

I applied this same method to additional questions where a scatterplot would not have been appropriate due to the categorical or binary nature of some variables. These questions included:

- Whether specific musical genres (e.g., classical vs. CCM) correlate with greater awareness of emotional interference
- Whether formal education or alternative training (e.g., workshops or independent study) is associated with higher emotional awareness

Pearson's *r* allowed me to assess the linear associations between these variables and indicators of emotion-informed teaching practice, even when the data involved a combination of binary, ordinal, and scaled variables (Dancey and Reidy, 2017).

I also wanted to explore two additional questions using quantitative methods:

3. "Do specific musical genres (e.g., classical vs. CCM) correlate with greater awareness of emotional interference?"

4. "Does formal education correlate with emotional awareness?"

These questions were designed to see whether a teacher's stylistic background or type of training might be linked to how aware they are of the emotional aspects of singing and teaching.

Genres:

Genre	Consideration of Emotions (r)	Emotional Impact Rating (r)
Classical	0.08	0.58
CCM	0.24	0.17
Musical Theater	-0.23	-0.19

Conclusions:

- Classical singers showed a strong positive correlation with *Emotional Impact Rating* (r = 0.58), indicating that classical singers are the most likely to perceive emotional interference as significantly affecting vocal technique. However, their *Consideration*

of Emotions in Teaching was low (r = 0.08), suggesting this awareness may not consistently translate into pedagogical responsiveness.

- CCM (Contemporary Commercial Music) singers had a moderate positive correlation with *Consideration of Emotions* (r = 0.24) and a weaker correlation with *Emotional Impact Rating* (r = 0.17), suggesting they are somewhat aware of emotional interference and more likely than classical singers to integrate that awareness into teaching.

- Musical Theater singers showed negative correlations with both *Consideration* (r = -0.23) and *Emotional Impact Rating* (r = -0.19), suggesting they may be less likely to recognize or prioritize emotional challenges in singing or teaching.

BUT…

Because participants were able to select multiple musical genres, the resulting data reflect associative patterns rather than exclusive group comparisons. That is, a single participant may have contributed to correlations in more than one genre category (e.g., Classical and Musical Theater), which can blur distinctions between groups and dilute or mask clear stylistic differences (Field, 2024). As a result, the correlations observed should be interpreted as indicating that participants who include a given genre in their background are more or less likely to demonstrate emotional awareness, rather than suggesting that one genre group is definitively more emotionally attuned than another. This limitation is common in self-report questionnaire research using non-mutually exclusive categorical variables (Bryman, 2016), and it is important to consider these overlaps when drawing conclusions about genre-based pedagogical trends.

Education:

Training Type	Consideration of Emotion (r)	Emotional Impact Awareness (r)
Formal education (degrees)	–0.20	–0.30
Independent study	0.09	0.35
Workshops	0.41	–0.00
No training	–0.29	–0.17

Conclusions:

- Those with formal degrees are less likely to recognize or consider emotional challenges.
- Those who pursued workshops or independent study are more attuned to emotional needs, with workshops correlating most strongly to teacher consideration.
- No training correlated negatively with both awareness and consideration.

Appendix G: Interview Invitations

The following invitations were slightly modified depending on the participant's area of specialty.

Sample invitation for professionals in fields relevant to singing (e.g., movement, psychology) who engage in singing recreationally rather than professionally

Subject: Interview Request for My MA Project on Emotional Interference in Singing

Hi Dr. Persinger,

I'm currently working on my MA project titled *From Affect to Artistry: Understanding Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role*. My research explores how anxiety and strong emotions impact singers' vocal performance, and how different strategies, both psychological and pedagogical, can help singers move through emotional barriers.

Given your unique experience as both a psychologist and a voice student, I would love to interview you as part of my research. I deeply respect the expertise you bring in integrating mind-body approaches to healing, and I believe your perspective would offer valuable insights into how emotional regulation, mental health modalities, and singing intersect.

The interview would be audio-recorded so that I can accurately capture your insights, and of course, your responses would remain confidential and anonymized in the final report. To ensure we have a quiet environment for clear recording, I would be happy to come to your home, invite you to my place, or find another quiet spot — whichever is most convenient for you. (A restaurant or public space might be too noisy for this.)

During the interview, I would love to talk with you about your experiences working on singing personally, your observations about emotions and performance, and any modalities or techniques you feel are particularly effective for managing emotional interference.

Here are some of the topics we might explore, although there is flexibility to follow interesting threads that come up naturally:

- Your background in psychology and singing, and any intersections you have observed between the two.

- Techniques or modalities you have found helpful for managing emotional or physiological blocks in performance.

- Your thoughts on how emotions impact performance and learning, and strategies you find effective for supporting resilience and emotional regulation in performers.

- Reflections on what voice teachers might benefit from understanding about psychological processes in the studio.

Would you be open to scheduling a time to meet? I'm happy to work around your availability and can send more detailed information about the process if you'd like.

Thank you so much for considering it — I would be truly grateful for your insights and expertise!

Sample invitation sent to voice professionals and teachers:

Subject: Interview Request for My MA Project on Emotional Interference in Singing

Hi Karen,

I'm currently working on my MA project titled *From Affect to Artistry: Understanding Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role*. My research explores how anxiety, physical tension, and strong emotions impact singers' vocal performance, and how teachers integrate strategies to help students overcome these challenges.

Given your experience as both a voice teacher and a Feldenkrais practitioner, I would be honored to interview you as part of my research. I am deeply interested in how your work with Awareness Through Movement intersects with vocal pedagogy, particularly in helping singers calm the body, regulate emotions, and develop greater self-awareness in their

artistry. I believe your perspective would offer invaluable insights into how somatic approaches can support emotional resilience and freedom in singing.

The interview would be audio-recorded so I can accurately capture your insights, and all responses will remain confidential and anonymized in the final report. To ensure we have a quiet recording environment, I would be happy to come to your home, invite you to my place, or arrange another quiet location — whatever is most convenient for you. (A restaurant or noisy public space probably wouldn't work as well.)

During the interview, I would love to hear your reflections on topics such as:

- How you see the relationship between movement, emotional regulation, and vocal performance.
- Specific ways Feldenkrais work has helped singers move through emotional or physical blocks.
- Any success stories where somatic awareness opened new possibilities for students.
- Your personal philosophy on balancing technical vocal instruction with emotional support.

Of course, the conversation will also leave space to follow any interesting paths that may arise naturally.

Would you be open to scheduling a time to meet? I would be so grateful to hear your thoughts and experiences. I'm happy to work around your availability and can send a little more information about the process if you'd like.

Thank you so much for considering it!

Process:

In creating the message, I aimed to be friendly and non-demanding, while still providing enough information for the recipient to understand the purpose and scope of the project. I introduced myself by including my project title, a brief description of my research focus, and the name of the master's program I am completing. I also included a short explanation of why I was reaching out to that particular individual, highlighting the specific skills,

experiences, or insights they might bring to the topic and how those aligned with my research aims.

To help potential participants make an informed decision, I shared a brief sample of the types of questions I might ask during the interview. This gave them a sense of what to expect and an opportunity to begin reflecting in advance. I also expressed sincere gratitude in the invitation for their time and willingness to support the project, whether meeting in person or via Zoom.

For those who agreed to participate, I later sent a more detailed list of questions prior to the interview.

Sample of preliminary interview questions sent to participants:

Possible Interview Questions:

1. **Introductory Information**
    - Could you please state your name, your current role, and a brief overview of your professional background?
    - How many years have you been teaching voice, and or singing and at what levels (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced, pre-professional, professional)?
    - Where have you taught voice (e.g., private studio, university, community programs, etc.)?
2. **Approaches and Modalities**
    - What modalities, techniques, or approaches have you studied and incorporated into your teaching to help singers manage strong emotions or anxiety?
    - What initially inspired you to pursue additional research, study, or training in these areas?
3. **Experience and Outcomes**
    - Can you share one or two success stories where a specific modality or approach helped a singer move through emotional or psychological barriers and reach a higher level of performance?

- Are there particular techniques or approaches that you find yourself returning to most often when addressing emotional interference with students?

4. **Personal Philosophy and Observations**

    - How do you approach the balance between technical vocal instruction and addressing emotional/psychological needs in your studio?

    - How do you recognize when a student's emotional state is impacting their vocal performance?

    - When you do recognize emotional interference, what is your typical first response or strategy?

5. **General Views**

    - In your opinion, how important is it for voice teachers to be trained in recognizing and managing emotional distress in singers?

    - Are there areas where you feel voice teachers could receive better training or resources for supporting students emotionally?

6. **Final Reflection**

    - Is there anything you wish more singers (or singing teachers) understood about the connection between emotions and singing?

    - If you could design an ideal resource for teachers on this subject, what would it include?

Appendix H: Interview Coding

For the analysis of the interview data, I employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), a flexible and widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. Each interview transcript was manually coded using color-coded highlighting, with each color representing a distinct theme that emerged consistently across multiple interviews. This method provided visual clarity and allowed for more efficient cross-referencing of thematic content (Saldaña, 2016). The following themes were applied: the need for teachers to create safe spaces for students (coded in blue); the importance of acknowledging students' emotional challenges and respecting them as individuals (pink); the value of cultivating a sense of play in the learning environment (yellow); the use of helpful distractions to redirect emotional tension (orange); the inclusion of movement or breath-based strategies (green); and the recognition that teachers must also engage in self-work to effectively support others (purple). These themes were color-coded consistently across all transcripts, accompanied by a theme key and reflective memos, following best practices in qualitative coding and data organization (Nowell et al., 2017).

Theme Key:		
Color	**Theme Name**	**Description**
Blue	Safe Space	References to teachers creating emotionally safe or welcoming environments
Pink	Respect & Awareness	Teachers acknowledging students' emotional lives and treating them as people
Yellow	Playfulness	Use of fun, creativity, or levity to support learning
Orange	Helpful Distraction	Use of re-focusing techniques to manage emotional overwhelm
Green	Movement & Breath	References to physical or breath-based regulation strategies
Purple	Teacher Self-Work	Quotes about teachers needing to do personal development or emotional work

In developing my thematic coding system, I selected colors intentionally to align with the emotional tone and psychological associations of each theme, drawing on research from color-emotion studies. For the theme of creating safe spaces for students, I chose blue, a color consistently linked with calmness, trust, and emotional stability (Elliot and Maier, 2012), making it a strong visual cue for emotional safety. For the theme acknowledging

students' emotional challenges and respecting them as individuals, I used pink, a color associated with empathy, compassion, and warmth across cultures, evoking a sense of care and gentle human connection (Naz, Epps and Khan, 2019). The theme playfulness in the learning environment was represented with yellow, a color frequently connected to joy, creativity, and optimism, supporting its use as a marker for spontaneity and energetic engagement (Ou and Luo, 2006). For helpful distractions, strategies that redirect emotional overwhelm, I chose orange, a stimulating and attention-grabbing color that has been linked to alertness and emotional arousal (Valdez and Mehrabian, 1994). The theme incorporating movement or breath was marked with green, a color commonly associated with nature, physical grounding, and psychological restoration (Chang and Chen, 2005), aligning with the somatic and regulatory elements discussed by participants. Finally, for the theme teacher's self-work, I selected purple, which is frequently linked with introspection, depth, and wisdom, qualities central to personal growth and emotional maturity (Hemphill, 1996). Using these color associations not only helped visually organize the data but also reinforced the affective qualities of each thematic category.

Appendix I: Interviews

In accordance with program guidance, I have included all full interview transcripts conducted as part of this research project. To ensure clarity and maintain a manageable length within the main document, the complete transcripts are being submitted as a separate supplementary file.

This appendix includes:

- The name and professional context of each interviewee
- A selection of key quotes that reflect thematic highlights relevant to the findings
- Color coding aligned with my thematic analysis process (as described in the Methodology section)

Interview Transcript (see page 1 of supplemental appendix)
Amanda McTigue, Acting Coach, Writer, amandamctigue.com
Cotati, California, Friday, June 6, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Amanda McTigue

Helpful Distraction:

"What we are doing is imagining in such a way, by we, I mean everybody, including teachers, that we transport people."

"One is, first of all, teacher, understand whatever you're putting in the mind of the performer is what they will focus on. Ask yourself, teacher. Why would it ever be helpful to focus them on what you don't want ever? "

Play

"So one thing I know is I bring a huge sense of humor into the room."

"… if they're enjoying playing with the right image, the high c is going to solve itself. I invite them to play around to see where they're comfortable. But when I, can I invite them into an experience, an internal experience that's so compelling that The last thing they're thinking about is, "I'm embarrassed to be, you know, standing here singing", "I'm lost", or did I get that note right?"."

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

"I know another subset of teachers who are feeling the pain of the students. There are students who are in so much pain that a lot of emotion is going to come up when they work, no matter what they work on. And then there's the other issue, which is sometimes you're working on really emotional material and stuff comes up. And what happens when stuff comes? We can't make noise. We cry. The throat tightens up. We go to pieces in a scene, like forget singing for a second, you lose your lines. You just go, the body is going to have the reaction it does. Fine. So what I encourage is, yeah, let's, we're going to do this, but I think the goal is finding that. Go ahead and

not be able to sing it. Let the piano keep playing and you come back to it when you can because you're going to want that. You're going to want to know what that song means to you. After a while, it's very interesting that most people... First just surge of pain, which means I, the singer, have to cry, begins to drop down because I've let, I've loosened that valve and that's come through. And after a while, that sense of it coming to get me and that it means that much to me is there, but I can now "

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

"And so we want to unlock bodies. One way to do it is staging."

Safe Space

" Safety in the room, by the way, I have lots of teachers, Melinda's one, she gets her students busy, so she has the students sit in the workshop, but they each have a task, so they're not just sitting there, one's taking notes, the room is very active, you get the, she she gets them all doing tasks, it's very smart. So that nobody's too locked into evaluation."

Interview Transcript (see page 17 of supplemental appendix)
Beth Freeman, Voice Teacher, Certified Hypnotherapist,
Guerneville, California, Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Beth Freeman

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

"You acknowledge it, but you go right on. You don't want to feed into that. And it's a little bit of a dance to know, is this something that needs to be pursued here a little, or is it something to always acknowledge? Always acknowledge."

"Yeah, the first thing is acknowledge. You can't change what you don't acknowledge. Not that you can necessarily change it, but the elephant in the room is simply acknowledge it... Sometimes it's a little bit more involved."

"Voice teachers shouldn't be expected to fix it... but one thing we do need to know is resources."

"There's even been times when I have been under just tremendous stress... I have had a student come in and after about five or ten minutes, they'll stop and say, 'Beth, I think you need a tea day.'"

Safe Space

"We have tea day... I'll put the kettle on and we spend their lesson talking."

"There are students who are rock solid, but once in a while they'll come in... and singing changes your brain chemistry. It gives you endorphins... After a little bit of singing, they're fine."

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

“Noticing shallow breathing, not breathing, or what I call truncated breathing... It’s like, ‘Mmm, that’s too scary.’”

“Unwillingness to open their mouth... You just want to unzip them so they can breathe.”

Teacher’s Self-Work

“There’s even been times when I have been under just tremendous stress... I have had a student come in and say, ‘Beth, I think you need a tea day.’”

Interview Transcript (see page 28 of supplemental appendix)
Deborah Meyers, Certified Acupressurist, Jin Shin Jyutsu Practitioner, deborahmyerswellness.com
Zoom Interview, Thursday, May 22, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Deborah Meyers

Safe Space

“I was always telling and showing my clients what to do for self-help. I knew it worked for me. I wanted them to recognize that all you needed to do is have a technique that is easy to do, easy to remember... because the benefits are noticeable.”

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

“Everything that I do works on all layers and all levels—physical, mental, emotional, even spiritual.”

“Whatever has affected the body and created a condition… I actually call things ‘projects’ instead of problems.”

Play

“I constantly discover how to make use of everything I had been introduced to as self-help.”

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

“It’s all about breath. When the energy’s flowing, the breath follows. When the breath is there, the energy flows and follows.”

“The tissues within the body… are more lubricated. Which means there’s more fluidity… even the vocal cords have more room to function.”

Interview Transcript (see page 37 of supplemental appendix)
Dr. Alexander Kahn
Director of Orchestral Activities, Sonoma State University

Santa Rosa Symphony Assistant Conductor
Music Director and Conductor of the Napa Valley Youth Symphony
Sebastopol, California, Tuesday, May 20th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Alexander Kahn

Safe Space

“There’s such vulnerability in making music, especially when you’re not confident. My goal is to make students feel they can try things without worrying about being wrong.”

“I think rehearsal spaces should be experimental labs, not performance zones. That takes the pressure off and helps people feel safe.”

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

“I’ve seen students shut down because they don’t feel emotionally supported. If someone’s tense or not singing well, there’s probably a reason that goes beyond technique.”

“You have to be aware that people come in with all kinds of baggage. I try to meet them where they are emotionally, not just musically.”

Play

“We play a lot with sound colors and storytelling, sometimes I ask them to sing like a villain or a cartoon character. It brings out a different energy and frees the voice.”

Helpful Distraction

“If someone’s getting stuck, I might have them conduct the piece instead of sing it. Just to reset the brain and shift focus.”

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

“I’ve incorporated some Feldenkrais into warm-ups, just getting them aware of how their body moves with breath can make a big difference.”

“Even walking a phrase or conducting it physically helps integrate the music in a somatic way.”

Teacher’s Self-Work

“I’ve had to let go of some of the rigidity I grew up with in classical training. That’s been a journey, and I think it’s made me a more responsive teacher.”

“I realized I was modeling stress for my students: rushing, over-correcting, being critical. That had to change.”

Interview Transcript (see page 46 of supplemental appendix)
Karen Clark, Voice Teacher, Feldenkrais Method Teacher, karenclark.studio
Petaluma, California, Friday, May 9th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Karen Clark

Safe Space

"I think especially when you're working with people who are not going into music professionally, you have to build that sense of trust and safety. They need to feel like they're not being judged."

"My role is to create a space where they can explore their voice without fear. It's not about 'right or wrong', it's about discovery."

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

"Some of my students carry deep emotional patterns in the way they use their voice. You can't just correct the note, you have to recognize what else is going on."

"I had a lot of vocal tension in grad school, and no one ever asked me what was going on emotionally. That silence was damaging."

Play

"We try things that are a little silly, like medieval vowels or rhythmic body percussion, and students get out of their heads. That playfulness changes everything."

"Sometimes I have them sing a passage as if they were casting a spell or telling a bedtime story, it opens up new vocal colors."

Helpful Distraction

"When someone is frozen, I'll often ask them to improvise a drone or walk a rhythm instead of singing. It bypasses the fear and gets them moving again."

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

"I always check their breath first. If there's a breath-holding pattern, that's often where emotional constriction is hiding."

"Even just having them sway or open their arms while singing can help free the sound."

Teacher's Self-Work

"I've had to do a lot of reflection on my own habits, especially perfectionism. That used to creep into my teaching until I noticed it was harming students."

“My own vocal journey has made me much more sensitive to what others are carrying. I think we need to be willing to evolve continuously as teachers.”

Interview Transcript (see page 65 of supplemental appendix)
Dr. Judith Hoffman, Chiropractor, Movement specialist, cotatichiropractic.com
Zoom Interview, Thursday, June 5th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Juddith Hoffman

Safe Space

“I think this is crucial stuff that I think would have changed my whole course of studying music if the teachers that I had been working with had been informed in this way.”

“We have to create the container that allows people to be vulnerable and not ashamed of that.”

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

“I quit singing because of vocal cord fatigue... It was emotional. It wasn’t just physical. I felt like no one cared what I was going through.”

“So much of what we label as ‘technique problems’ are really trauma responses.”

Play

“I’ll tell my students, ‘Let’s play with this like it’s a puppet voice.’ That frees them up instantly.”

Helpful Distraction

“Sometimes I do silly vocal warmups just to get them out of their heads. It’s not about the exercise—it’s about loosening the grip of perfection.”

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

“When someone’s anxious, I have them hum and walk at the same time. It grounds them without needing to talk about what’s wrong.”

Teacher’s Self-Work

“It took me years of therapy to realize I was replicating my own experiences with my students. I had to unlearn a lot.”

“I’m constantly checking in—am I acting out of ego, or am I truly listening?”

Interview Transcript (see page 72 of supplemental appendix)

Heidi Moss Erickson, Voice Teacher, heidimosserickson.com
Zoom Interview, Wednesday June 4th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Heidi Moss Erickson

Safe Space

> *"And I think for me it is the value of being seen in that space, in that trusted space where somebody isn't trying to change you. They're just allowing you to feel and express."*
>
> *"I feel like safety and nervous system regulation are the doorways to the whole thing."*

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

> *"I always say: the body doesn't lie. If somebody is trembling or tight or gasping, we have to ask what's happening emotionally."*
>
> *"I try not to bypass what comes up. Even if it's uncomfortable, that's where the gold is."*

Play

> *"Sometimes I just make weird sounds with them. No judgment, just exploration. That gets us out of 'performance mode' and into 'curiosity mode.'"*

Helpful Distraction

> *"If someone is spiraling, I might ask them to walk around or look out the window. That tiny shift can break the loop."*

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

> *"Everything starts with breath and grounding. Without that, nothing can integrate."*
>
> *"I have them tap their chest or hum while swaying. It gets them back in their body."*

Teacher's Self-Work

> *"This is personal for me. I had a lot of shutdown as a performer, and only through somatic therapy did I realize how much I was carrying. That changes how I teach now."*
>
> *"If I'm not present or regulated, I can't hold that space for someone else. So I always check in with myself before lessons."*

Interview Transcript (see page 82 of supplemental appendix)

Susan Witt-Butler, Voice Teacher
Santa Rosa, California, Wednesday May 7th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Susan Witt-Butler

Safe Space

> *"I really love this kind of exchange. And the deeper relationship, which we'll get into later too, about how you are with people who step into your studio."*

> *"A lot of times we're doing therapy in the studio, but we're not trained therapists. So we have to create an environment that allows things to come up without pushing people over the edge."*

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

> *"I felt that as a solo performer... it was a very lonely profession. So when I had the opportunity to join this organization with the opera, which was sort of a family affair, I took it on…"*

> *"People are so broken these days. I mean, they're trying to just hold it together. And then they come into the studio, and sometimes the breath just lets it all out."*

Play

> *"Sometimes I'll just say, 'Let's pretend you're singing this for a six-year-old who has no idea what opera is.' And suddenly they loosen up."*

Helpful Distraction

> *"There are times where I stop the singing and we just hum or sigh or do something that doesn't have a 'goal.' That helps reset things emotionally."*

Breath or Movement-Based Strategy

> *"Breath is everything. If they're locked up emotionally, it will show up in their breathing first. So I always go there first."*

> *"Sometimes I'll get them to sway or move while they sing, especially if they're feeling frozen."*

Self-Work

> *"I've had to do a lot of reflection on my own patterns—like wanting to fix people. That doesn't help. It's more about being present and letting their process unfold."*

"You know, over the years I've realized that if I'm not grounded, they won't be either. So I try to walk in centered, or I don't teach."

Interview Transcript (see page 110 of supplemental appendix)
Melinda Moreaux, Voice Teacher, melindamoreaux.com
Penngrove, California, Sunday, May 25th, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Melinda Moreaux

Safe Space

"I try to give them the sense that it's okay to be exactly where they are. That means not just vocally, but emotionally too. If they need a moment, they get it."

Emotional Acknowledgment and Respect

"You can't always separate the voice from the emotion. Sometimes a student breaks down in a lesson, and that's part of the work, not outside of it."

Play

"We'll do weird stuff, like vocal sirens while pretending to be aliens. I think that silliness is really helpful when students are nervous or self-conscious."

Helpful Distraction

"If someone's stuck in their head, I won't talk about the emotion directly, I'll just shift focus to something simple, like moving their arms or walking while singing."

Movement or Breath Strategy

"Even just rolling the shoulders or connecting to breath at the beginning helps reset the whole nervous system."

Teacher's Self-Work

"I've definitely had to do my own work. If I'm not regulated, I can't expect them to be. That's something I didn't realize when I first started teaching."

Interview Transcript (see page 124 of supplemental appendix)
Joe Persinger, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist, drjoepersinger.com
Sebastopol, California, Friday, May 16, 2025

Coded Interview Excerpts Joe Persinger

Teacher's Self-Work

"The reason I didn't go to medical school was because I had undiagnosed ADHD... I was a somewhat indifferent student. But through my father I got interested in humanistic psychology... I've done a lot of inner work over the

years, therapy, meditation, study,because I knew I had to learn how to show up differently."

Emotional Acknowledgment

"In therapy, you're not just treating symptoms, you're honoring someone's whole experience. That includes shame, fear, and the stuff people usually hide."

Movement or Breath-Based Strategy

"The body's always involved. We think of anxiety as a mental thing, but it's physiological. Breathing changes everything, it's the first thing I address when someone is activated."

Safe Space

"Creating a holding environment, that's what Winnicott called it, is fundamental. People can't explore or change if they feel judged or unsafe."

Appendix J: Persinger Breathing Exercise Handouts

Joe Persinger, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychology
joe.persinger@sonic.net

Erickson Institute
707-526-7720 ext.325
drjoepersinger.com

Brief Relaxation

Take a deep easy breath, deep down into your abdomen. Imagine the air is pouring into you like water pouring into a pitcher, filling you up from the bottom of your abdomen and the base of your spine all the way up to your shoulders. Fill up from the bottom up. As you inhale, let your abdomen and lower back expand first, then your chest and upper back.

Now hold your breath for a few seconds and smile gently. Smiling immediately changes your body chemistry and helps you relax more deeply.

As you smile, think a relaxing word, phrase or image to yourself; for example: *calm…relax…peace…let go…* Or, you can think of a time that you felt relaxed and smiling, such as walking on a beach, relaxing in front of a fire or seeing your loved-one's face.

Now close your eyes and exhale. Let the air pour out of you. While the air pours out, let your mouth and jaws relax, let your shoulders drop and feel a wave of relaxation sweep down through you from your head to your feet. Let that wave wash the stress and tension out of you. Let the tension drain out of your body like a liquid, down through your legs and out your feet.

Now open your eyes. Keep smiling, breathe slowly and deeply and resume your activity.

Repeat this exercise each hour of the day for a month, until it becomes second nature to you. After that, do it whenever you feel tense.

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Find a comfortable position (lying down, sitting, standing). Take a deep easy breath in and fill your lungs. Slowly breathe out while humming at your normal conversational pitch until your lungs are empty. As you hum, focus on where you feel the vibration, somewhere between your throat and your abdomen. Once your lungs are empty, take another deep easy breath in and repeat. Do this three times. You may notice that each time you do it, the location of the vibration that you feel may drop lower.

Joe Persinger PhD **1/18**

Vooo Breath

Find a comfortable position (lying down, sitting, standing). Take a deep easy breath in and fill your lungs. Slowly breathe out while making a *Voooo* sound at your normal conversational pitch until your lungs are empty. As you *Voooo*, focus on where you feel the vibration, somewhere between your throat and your abdomen. Once your lungs are empty, take another deep easy breath in and repeat. Do this three times. You may notice that each time you do it, the location of the vibration that you feel may drop lower.

Joe Persinger PhD **1/15**

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Quick Coherence Technique

Institute of HeartMath

Step 1: Heart Focus.

Focus your attention on the area around your heart, the area in the center of your chest. If you prefer, the first couple of times you try it, place your hand over the center of your chest to help keep your attention in the heart area.

Step 2: Heart Breathing.

Breathe deeply but normally and feel as if your breath is coming in and going out through your heart area. As you inhale, feel as if your breath is flowing in through the heart, and as you exhale, feel it leaving through this area. Breathe slowly and casually, a little deeper than normal. Continue breathing with ease until you find a natural inner rhythm that feels good to you.

Step 3: Heart Feeling.

As you maintain your heart focus and heart breathing, activate a positive feeling. Recall a positive feeling, a time when you felt good inside, and try to re-experience the feeling. One of the easiest ways to generate a positive, heart-based feeling is to remember a special place you've been to or the love you feel for a close friend or family member or treasured pet. This is the most important step.

Quick Coherence® is especially useful when you start to feel a draining emotion such as frustration, irritation, anxiety or stress. Using Quick Coherence at the onset of less intense negative emotions can keep them from escalating into something worse. This technique is especially useful after you've had an emotional blowup to bring yourself back into balance quickly

5/16/2025http://www.heartmath.org

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4/7/8 Breathing Skill

WHAT IS IT?

The 4-7-8 breathing technique was pioneered Dr. Andrew Weill from Arizona, who describes the yoga-inspired method as "utterly simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere."

Dr.Weill claims that 4-7-8 breathing can help people fall asleep in just 60 seconds by acting as a "natural tranquilizer for the nervous system" that reduces stress and tension in the body.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

1. Before you begin, place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your front teeth and keep it there throughout the exercise.

2. Exhale completely through your mouth quite forcefully so you make a "whoosh" sound.

3. Close your mouth and inhale quietly and softly through your nose for a mental **count of four.**

4. Hold your breath and **count to seven.**

5. Next, exhale completely through your mouth, making another whoosh sound **for eight seconds** in one large breath. Purse your lips to control the volume to last 8 seconds.

6. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three times Remember: All inhaling breaths must be quiet and through your nose and all exhaling breaths must be loud and through your mouth.

HOW DOES IT HELP?

1. It takes on more oxygen relaxes the parasympathetic nervous system and promotes a state of calmness.

2. It helps rebalance the nervous system, which can become over stimulated during times of stress.

3. It helps you connect with your body and your breathing and distract you from everyday thoughts that can prevent you from sleeping.

1/6/16

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Seven Good Things

Take a deep easy breath, deep down into your abdomen. As you hold your breath for a few seconds, let the corners of your mouth turn up in a slight smile, just enough to feel.

As you smile, remember something nice you **saw** recently. It can be a scene from outdoors, someone's smile, a beautiful picture, anything that was pleasing to your eyes. Remember how you felt when you saw it, and let your body feel those feelings again. Now exhale slowly as you think the phrase "*Thank you.*"

You don't have to thank anyone in particular. The feeling of gratitude itself is healing. It 'opens' your heart.

Now take a second deep breath, smile and recall something pleasing that you **heard** recently: someone's voice, a sound from nature, a piece of music you like, etc. Recall how you felt when you heard it, and let your body feel those feelings again. When you can feel them, release your breath and think the phrase *"Thank you."*

Take a third breath, smile and repeat the process with something pleasing that you **smelled**, a fragrance or aroma. It can be something from out of doors, someone's perfume, or anything else that was pleasing to your nose.

Now repeat the process with something pleasant that you **tasted** (ate or drank). Take enough time to really feel those feelings again.

For breath number five, smile recall something that felt good through your **skin** – the warmth of the sun, the feel of a breeze, a hot shower, a hug, holding someone's hand, etc.

For the sixth breath, as you hold your breath, smile and think of something in your life that you feel truly appreciative or **grateful** for. It can be little, like appreciating a fine morning or someone smiling at you, or big, like the love you feel for your partner or for God. It can be anything for which you *feel a genuine heart-felt feeling* of gratitude or appreciation. As you hold your breath, feel the gratitude in your body and your heart. Then exhale as you think the phrase, *Thank you.*

Take one final breath, smile and think of one more thing in your life that you feel **grateful** for. Take time to feel the gratitude in your body. Gently release your breath and think the Phrase, *Thank you.*

Now slowly open your eyes, keep them soft and let them look around for a moment. You can keep the feelings for as long as you want.

INTRODUCTION AND BREATHING BASICS

(For more detailed information on breathing, I recommend the book *Breath* by James Nestor. He also has several YouTube videos).

The following are basic principles that, if followed, will give you the maximum benefit from healthy breathing:

1. Keep your mouth closed.
2. Breathe in and out through your nose.
3. When you inhale, inhale slowly and deeply.
4. When you exhale, exhale slowly and completely before inhaling again.
5. Practice holding your breath from time to time with both full lungs and empty lungs.
6. Breathe heavily for short periods from time to time.
7. Chew more; exercise your jaw muscles.
8. Practice one of the breathing exercises listed below each day.

BREATHING EXERCISES

(Practice these mindfully and easily; don't hurt yourself. Stop for a moment if you begin to get dizzy.)

These breathing techniques are all designed to calm and balance your nervous system. This can help you remain on a more even keel throughout the day. Try all of these at various times and keep the ones that feel good to you.
The *bedtime breath* technique can help with sleep initiation.

In General:
Throughout the day, pay attention to your breathing and let your breath remain slow and calm, about equal amounts of time breathing in and breathing out. Invite your body to relax each time you exhale. Smiling gently as you breathe can enhance a feeling of ease.

Simple breath (3/7):
Breathe in through your nose for 3 seconds, exhale for 7 seconds (you can exhale through your nose or mouth. If you exhale through your mouth, purse your lips and let your tongue rest on the roof of your mouth behind your front teeth as you exhale.) Repeat as many times as you like.

Morning Breath (4/4/6/2):
Sit on the edge of your bed with your spine erect and straight. inhale fully through your nose for a count of four seconds. Hold for a count of four seconds. Rest the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth right behind your front teeth, purse your lips and exhale fully for a count of 6 seconds. Hold for a count of two seconds. Repeat the series for two to 10 minutes.

8/30/22

Ocean Breath (7/7):
Inhale fully through your nose for 7 seconds. Exhale fully emptying your lungs for a count of seven seconds. Repeat 5 to 10 times. You can repeat indefinitely while meditating. (If 7 seconds is too long, start with however long is comfortable for you, and then gradually work up to 7 seconds).

4/7/8 Breath:
Rest the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth right behind your front teeth and leave it there for the entire series. Breathe in through the nose for a count of four, fully inflating your lungs. Hold your breath for a count of seven. purse your lips and forcefully blow out for a count of eight, fully emptying your lungs. Repeat 4 to 8 times.

Box Breath (4/4/4/4):
Inhale slowly for a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale slowly for a count of four, hold for a count of four. Repeat As many times as you like.

Shining Skull Breath:
Sit comfortably with erect spine. Place hands on thighs palms down. Forcefully pump the navel and exhale through your nose completely, allow the breath to return naturally. Repeat for a total of 15 breaths. Rest for about 30 seconds by turning palms up and breathing lightly. Repeat the entire series twice more.

Candle Blowing Breath:
Rest hands on thighs palms down. Take a deep breath in through the nose, filling your lungs entirely. Blow out forcefully until your lungs are completely empty. Make the exhale longer than the inhale.
Repeat twice more.

Coordinate Breath with Muscles:
Sit with your spine erect. Hold both hands close to your abdomen, palms facing towards body. Breathe in fully and push navel out while moving hands out to sides, pivoting on the elbows, palms facing forward. Exhale fully while moving palms back to near abdomen.
Repeat for a total of three breaths.

Now hold your left arm close to your chest, elbow bent, hand in a loose fist. Inhale fully while reaching your arm up and overhead with palm forward fingers outstretched. This will open-up your rib cage.
Repeat 3 to 5 times.
Now repeat the series with the right arm.
Rest for a half minute or so.

Bellows Breath:
Hold arms to sides with elbows bent, comfortably close to the sides of your rib cage, hands in loose fists. Inhale fully while reaching all the way up and opening hands. Exhale

forcefully while bringing arms quickly back to your sides gently whacking your rib cage.
Repeat for a total of 10 breaths.
Rest with palms upwards on thighs for about a half minute.
Repeat the series twice more.

Bedtime Breath:
You can start by sitting on the edge of your bed. Tap gently and fairly quickly on alternate thighs, at about the speed of a ticking pocket watch. Take a little time to get used to the rhythm and then begin to breathe slowly and rhythmically to account of four in and four out. You might start with two taps per number and increase to 4 taps per number. Do this for four deep and slow breaths. Then begin to gradually slow down your tapping, coming to a full stop in perhaps another 20 seconds. Then get into bed and fall asleep. Try this every night for a week to get used to the sequence and train your brain to turn itself off.
An alternate way of doing this technique is by lying in bed on your back, hugging yourself and tapping gently on your shoulders (butterfly tap).

Appendix K: Sample Lesson Participant Consent Form

Participant Information and Consent Form

Research Project Title: *From Affect to Artistry: Understanding* Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role in Supporting Artistic Resilience and Expression

Principal Investigator:
Christa Durand

Contact Information:
Email: ChristaDurand@gmail.com
Phone: 707-480-5889

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research project exploring how emotional states—such as anxiety, grief, or fear—can affect singing, and how voice teachers might help students safely navigate those experiences using simple, body-based calming techniques.

This phase of the study involves participating in **2–3 individual voice lessons**, during which specific techniques will be introduced and evaluated. The lessons will be **recorded for research analysis**, but **recordings will not be shared with anyone and will be stored securely**.

Please read the information below before deciding whether to participate. If you have questions, you may contact the researcher at any time.

Purpose of the Research

This study aims to:

- Understand how emotional interference shows up in the body during singing
- Explore practical, low-risk calming techniques that voice teachers can safely use without additional psychological credentials
- Compare how different strategies affect singers' vocal ease and emotional regulation

Your participation will directly inform this work and contribute to creating resources for voice teachers working with emotionally blocked or anxious students.

Why You Were Invited

You are being invited because you are a singer over the age of 18 and have agreed to participate in an experimental lesson series related to this research project.

What Participation Involves

If you agree to take part, your participation will involve:

- Attending 1–4 private voice lessons in person with Christa Durand
- Allowing each lesson to be **video or audio recorded** for the sole purpose of research review by the principal investigator
- Completing a short written reflection after each lesson to give feedback on your experiences

Each lesson will introduce one or more calming/grounding techniques to explore their effects on your emotional and vocal experience.

Important Notes:

- You will be assigned a **participant number**, and your **name will not be used in any reports, presentations, or publications**
- Only the principal investigator will have access to the lesson recordings
- You will not be identified in any data, quotes, or analysis
- You may choose to decline to be recorded, in which case notes will be taken instead

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may:

- Decline to answer any question
- Stop any lesson at any time
- Withdraw from the study at any point **before your data is anonymized**

Once your lesson reflections and recordings are anonymized (i.e., linked only to a participant number), data may not be withdrawn because it will no longer be possible to identify it as yours.

Potential Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks involved. However, some techniques or discussions may bring up strong emotions. You may:

- Decline any activity or discussion that feels uncomfortable
- Request breaks or stop the lesson at any time

While you may not receive direct personal benefit, your insights will support the development of practical tools for voice teachers and may help future singers facing similar challenges.

Confidentiality and Data Use

- Your name will be kept confidential and replaced with a participant number
- All recordings will be stored securely on a password-protected device and will **not** be shared outside the project
- Reflections, notes, and relevant excerpts may be quoted in the final MA thesis or future publications, but **always anonymously**

- Data will be retained until February 2028 and then securely deleted

Ethical Approval

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns about the ethical aspects of the project, you may contact:

University Contact Information:
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
+44 1570 422351
Voice Study Centre: info@voicestudycentre.com
The Old Stables, The Gattinetts, Hadleigh Road,
East Bergholt, Suffolk CO76QT, United Kingdom

Contact for Questions

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, please contact:

Christa Durand
Email: ChristaDurand@gmail.com
Phone: 707-480-5889

Consent Statement

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the information provided above
- I agree to participate in the research study as described
- I give permission for lessons to be recorded for research analysis by the investigator
- I understand that my identity will be kept confidential, and my name will not be used in any reports
- I understand I can withdraw at any time before my data is anonymized

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Invitation to singers to participate in sample voice lessons

Subject: Invitation to Participate in MA Research Study

I'm currently working on my MA project through the University of Wales Trinity St. David (via the Voice Study Centre), titled *From Affect to Artistry: Understanding* Emotional Interference in Singing and the Teacher's Role in Supporting Artistic Resilience and Expression

As part of this research, I'm exploring how strong emotions, like anxiety, grief, or fear, can affect the body in ways that interfere with vocal performance. Specifically, I'm interested in those moments when singers feel blocked or unable to "get their voice out," and how teachers might help safely and effectively.

To support this project, I'm offering a limited number of **free voice lessons** in exchange for your participation and feedback. Each participant will need to commit to **1–4 lessons**, as we'll be trying a variety of easy-to-learn calming techniques (drawn from somatics, psychology, and voice science) and comparing their effectiveness.

If you're interested, please sign up using this form:
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4AAEAF2FA2FEC25-57260936-sample
Spots are limited, so please sign up soon if you'd like to be involved!

What to Expect

- I've attached a **Participant Permission Form** for you to read in advance. I will have a **hard copy available at your first lesson** for you to sign.

- I've also included a **sample of the reflection questions** you'll be asked after each lesson. These are brief and designed to help me understand your experience and the effects of each technique.
- Please warm up before you come. Bring in Something you would like to work on. You may also bring in your own exercises.

Thank you so much for considering it! I'd love to have you be part of this exploration and hear your insights!

Appendix M: Sample Voice Lessons

After conducting interviews with professionals across multiple disciplines and reviewing relevant literature, I designed three exploratory sample lessons that each centered on a different form of mindfulness-informed practice. My intention was not to compare these modalities in a controlled way, but to see how similar underlying principles—such as attention to the body, present-moment awareness, and non-judgment—might manifest differently in practice. I selected these particular approaches because they all emphasized internal awareness and regulation, yet varied in how they structured that awareness. This allowed me to explore how subtle shifts in modality might affect the singer's experience (Lehmann et al., 2007; Carey et al., 2019).

The three sample lessons focused on:

- **Feldenkrais-informed voice exploration**, integrating gentle movement, breath, and sound to enhance body awareness and reduce habitual tension (Feldenkrais, 1977).

- **Mindfulness-informed singing**, emphasizing non-striving, compassionate attention, and breath as an anchor to help students notice sensations and cultivate emotional resilience (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Helding, 2020).

- **Body mapping** (inspired by Alexander Technique), which involved refining the student's mental model of their own anatomy and aligning that understanding with kinesthetic feedback to reduce unnecessary effort in singing (Conable and Conable, 2000; Vintinner and Meier, 2019).

Sample Lesson Plan 1: Feldenkrais-Informed Voice Exploration

Key Feldenkrais Principles Integrated:

- Small, gentle movements within comfort
- Attention to sensation rather than correction
- Exploration over repetition
- Integration of movement with breath and sound

Goals:

- Enhance body awareness to support efficient vocal production
- Release habitual tension patterns in the neck, jaw, and breathing system
- Explore vocal resonance and ease of phonation through gentle, exploratory movement

Arrival and Centering

- Sit or stand comfortably.
- Sense your contact with the chair or floor.
- Take a few breaths, noticing your rib movement without changing it.
- Lightly hum on a comfortable pitch, observing how the breath and sound meet.

Awareness Through Movement

Exploration: Head and Neck Freedom

"We will explore how your head and neck movements affect your breathing and sound."

- Scan:
    - Notice how your head sits on top of your spine.
    - Observe your jaw tension, tongue resting place, and shoulders.
- Small Movements:

  Gently turn your head right and left within comfortable, easy range.

  Notice if you hold your breath or tighten your jaw.

  Add a soft 'mmm' hum as you slowly turn, noticing vibration shifts.
- Jaw Exploration:

Open your mouth slightly, noticing the weight of your jaw.

Allow it to swing slightly as you hum on a comfortable pitch, noticing how the sound changes.

Breath Awareness:

- Place your hands on your lower ribs.
- Gently sense the movement as you inhale and hum on exhale.
- Add a slight turning of your head while humming.

Reflection

"Notice if you feel any differences in your ease of movement and breathing."

Vocal Exploration with Movement

Resonance Exploration:

- Stand or sit upright, imagining your head floating lightly on your spine.
- Place your hands on your chest and hum, noticing vibration.
- Slide from a hum to an ‘ng’ sound and then to an open vowel (e.g., ‘ah’), observing how the resonance shifts.

Movement Integration:

- While humming, gently shift your weight side to side.
- Explore slow pelvic circles while sustaining a soft hum.
- Try stepping forward and back on each phrase, noticing how the movement affects airflow and tone.

Application to Song/Exercise

Choose a simple vocal exercise or phrase from a song the student is working on.

1. Speak the phrase while noticing:
    - Neck and jaw tension
    - Breathing ease
    - Sense of grounding in the feet
2. Sing on a hum or ‘ng’, maintaining the ease found during movement explorations.
3. Sing the phrase fully, pausing to check if tension patterns return, and use gentle head turning or weight shifting to invite release.

Cool Down and Reflection

- Lie in constructive rest (knees bent, feet flat) if space allows, or sit comfortably.
- Notice your breath and sense of contact with the ground.
- Reflect with the student:
    - “What did you notice in your body while singing?”
    - “Did the movement change your sound or ease of singing?”

Why am I starting with or choosing Feldenkrais?

I chose to start with Feldenkrais in my sample lessons for several reasons. Of all the modalities explored in this project, it is the one I am most familiar with. During my undergraduate studies, one of the voice teachers was also a certified Feldenkrais instructor,

and we were fortunate to have many classes exploring these techniques. She is also a member of our local National Association of Teachers of Singing chapter and continues to offer workshops on Feldenkrais for singers that I regularly program for our chapter and attend.

Personally, Feldenkrais has been one of the most helpful practices I have explored for my singing and well-being. I struggled with staying present in my body and often felt disconnected while performing. Growing up, I was taught that the body existed to be used, that pain and discomfort should be ignored, and that acknowledging them was a sign of weakness. By the time I reached college, I was physically tense, twisted, and in pain, which deeply affected my singing. I would also dissociate during performances, which limited my expressive potential and ease of singing.

For reasons I have continued to explore during this project, many mindfulness-based modalities did not work for me. However, the movement-based awareness in Feldenkrais was the first approach that truly worked, creating a meaningful shift in my experience and helping me reconnect with my body.

Another reason I chose to start with Feldenkrais is that I already incorporate elements of it into my teaching, particularly when working with students who experience severe vocal issues related to tension patterns in the body outside the larynx. However, I have never taught an entire lesson with this much focus on Feldenkrais, and I wanted to try it in a more structured way.

Additionally, as I embarked on the first lessons in this project with students, I wanted to begin with something that felt comfortable and supportive for me as a teacher. Using a modality I am familiar with allows me to focus on observing the impact on students and refining my approach without adding additional layers of uncertainty in my teaching practice.

Sample Lesson Plan 2: Mindfulness-Informed Singing

Key Mindfulness Elements Integrated:

- Present-moment awareness
- Non-striving and non-judgment
- Observing sensations without attachment

- Kindness toward self during practice
- Breath as an anchor for attention

Goals:

- Develop present-moment awareness during singing
- Observe sensations and thoughts without judgment
- Foster non-striving, curiosity, and compassion toward oneself while singing
- Cultivate gentle breath awareness as a foundation for vocal production

Arrival and Mindful Centering

Take a moment to arrive fully in this space.

- Sit or stand comfortably, eyes closed or softly gazing downward.
- Bring awareness to contact with the floor or chair.
- Notice your breath moving in and out without trying to change it.
- Allow any thoughts to come and go like clouds, returning gently to the breath.

Optional:

Use a mindfulness bell or a chime to mark the beginning and end of this period.

Mindful Breath Exploration

- Place your hands gently on your lower ribs or belly.
- Feel the natural rise and fall with each breath.
- Notice where you feel tension or ease without judgment.
- On an exhale, hum softly on a comfortable pitch, observing how the breath and sound connect.
- Pause, notice any sensations, then repeat.

Vocal Awareness with Non-Striving

Exercise: Mindful Humming and Sliding

- Hum softly on an easy pitch, allowing the sound to emerge without pushing.
- Gently slide between two comfortable pitches, noticing resonance shifts.
- Observe:
    - Where you feel vibration
    - If your breath changes
    - Thoughts that arise (greet them kindly and return to the sound)

If tension or judgment arises, pause, place a hand over the heart, and breathe with kindness before resuming.

“Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.” (Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step*)

Song or Phrase Application

Let’s bring this gentle awareness into your singing.

- Select a short phrase from the student’s repertoire.
- Speak the phrase mindfully, feeling the words in the mouth and breath.
- Sing the phrase with awareness, focusing on:
    - Breath flow
    - Sensation of sound
    - Staying present even if mistakes happen
- After each attempt, pause, breathe, and reflect: “What did you notice in your body, breath, and mind?”

Mindful Cool Down

- Sit or lie in constructive rest.
- Observe the breath and body sensations.
- Invite a moment of gratitude for your body and voice, regardless of how the session felt.
- End with a shared breath or a gentle bow of thanks.

Optional Home Practice for the Student

- 5 minutes of mindful breathing each day, observing breath without trying to change it.
- Practice humming mindfully for 5 minutes, noticing vibrations and breath connection.
- Reflect: *How does mindfulness change your experience of singing?*

Short Meditation Practices for Musicians

(Kahn, A. (2019). The Mindful Musician: Mental Skills for Peak Performance. Oxford University Press.)

1. Integrate into Daily Rituals
    - Embedded meditation into routine activities: before practicing, during breaks, or after performances as part of a mindful ritual.
2. Use “Pre-Game” Strategies

    - Before starting practice: pause, take a few mindful breaths to center attention, calm the nervous system, and sharpen focus—what Kahn calls a “pre-game” meditation.
3. Mid-Game Refocus
    - During practice, briefly pause to return awareness to the breath or body when distractions or stress intrude—a mini-meditation to reset presence.
4. Post-Game Integration
    - After practicing or performing: use a short meditative reflection to observe sensations, noticing physical emergence, growth, tension release, curiosity, or compassion

Why did I choose mindfulness?

I chose mindfulness as the focus for my second lesson for several reasons, despite having mixed feelings about it. As someone who has struggled with the concept of mindfulness, particularly earlier in my life, I have found it less concrete than physical modalities like the Alexander Technique or Feldenkrais Method. Those practices involve creating awareness through movement, which, while also requiring effort and patience, has always felt more tangible and accessible to me.

Mindfulness, in my experience, can be a double-edged sword. Through years of studying mindfulness and reading Buddhist texts, I have seen the many ways it can ground us, help us appreciate ourselves and our lives, calm anxiety, and reduce scattered energy. It can help us be present and aware, fostering gratitude for the beauty around us.

However, my significant caveat is that becoming aware of what is happening inside can sometimes bring us face-to-face with turmoil, grief, or unresolved trauma. Some of these challenges can be gently worked through in mindfulness practice, but in many cases, I believe they require the support of therapy. Sometimes, the very reason we were disconnected from ourselves was to protect us from overwhelming experiences, and reconnecting with those feelings can be breathtakingly painful. For me, mindfulness has required a combination of therapy and gradual practice, learning to be present only as much as I can while continuing to heal.

Despite these complexities, I chose mindfulness for this lesson because I see how valuable it can be, especially within American culture, where many people are simply going through the motions of life, reacting rather than interacting and I think this practice could be deeply healing for our society in general. Integrating mindfulness into singing, music making, and daily life can help people slow down, connect, and find deeper meaning in their experiences. I believe the compassion for self that is woven into mindfulness practices is particularly beneficial for musicians, encouraging us to see ourselves as more than our mistakes and imperfections.

At the same time, I recognize that mindfulness may not be effective for everyone in every moment, particularly if the goal is to move through or calm strong emotions during a lesson. Like any modality, mindfulness can be triggering, and in my own life, it has sometimes been the most challenging practice of all. However, I continue to see its potential for helping individuals and communities find connection, compassion, and healing, which is why I am including it as part of this project.

Sample Lesson Plan 3: Body Mapping for Exploration (drawn from Alexander technique)

Key Principles Integrated:

- Accurate anatomical understanding (body mapping)
- Gentle exploration with movement
- Awareness of kinesthetic sensations
- Application to singing for efficiency and ease

Goals:

- Improve accuracy of body awareness related to singing
- Explore alignment and movement efficiency for vocal ease
- Reduce unnecessary tension and effort in singing
- Support healthy, sustainable vocal technique through accurate kinesthetic understanding

Arrival and Orientation

“Take a moment to arrive. Notice your feet on the floor, your seat in the chair, and the length of your spine.”

- Invite gentle breath observation without forcing.

- Ask:

  “What part of your body are you most aware of right now?”

  “What part feels easiest or lightest?”

Introduction to Body Mapping

- Briefly explain:

  “Body Mapping is learning how your body is designed to move, and updating any inaccurate maps you might have in your brain, so your singing becomes easier and healthier.”

- Emphasize:

  It’s about accuracy rather than “correct posture.”

  It can help singing feel freer and more efficient.

Mapping the Head-Spine Relationship

Exploration:

- Place fingers at the base of the skull to locate where the head meets the spine (atlanto-occipital joint).
- Gently nod the head “yes,” noticing this movement at the top of the spine, not at the neck.
- Gently turn the head “no,” observing ease in rotation.

Application:

- Try a gentle hum or short phrase while nodding slightly.
- Notice if the sound feels freer or different.

Explain:

“The head balances on top of the spine, and allowing it to move freely helps release tension in singing.”

Mapping Breathing Structures

Exploration:

- Place hands on the lower ribs and observe movement during natural breath.
- Trace with hands from the sternum around the ribcage to feel its shape.
- Notice that ribs move in three dimensions (front, sides, and back) during breath.

Discuss the diaphragm’s location:

“The diaphragm attaches around the lower ribcage and moves downward on inhalation, creating space for the lungs.”

Application:

- Hum on an easy pitch while observing rib movement.
- Sing a short phrase, focusing on allowing ribs to move rather than holding them still.

Mapping the Arm Structure in Singing

Exploration:

- Identify where the arm structure begins at the collarbone (clavicle) and shoulder blade (scapula), not just the shoulder joint.
- Gently roll shoulders and move arms to notice connection with the torso.
- Observe if lifting arms (optional) affects the breath.

Application:

- Sing a short phrase with arms resting comfortably.
- Then, gently allow arms to move naturally or float upward while singing, noticing if it creates more ease or tension.

Integration with a Song

Choose a familiar song or exercise.

- Before singing, quickly review:
  Head balancing on spine
  Rib movement with breath
  Arm freedom
- Sing the phrase with these awareness points, stopping to check:
  "What changed?"
  "Was there more ease or vibration?"
  "Did the sound feel freer?"

Grounding Reflection and Closure

- Invite the student to stand comfortably, take a breath, and observe sensations.
- Reflect:
  "What part of your body felt most helpful to notice today?"
  "How might you bring this awareness into your home practice?"

At-Home Practice:

- Spend 3–5 minutes noticing head balance, rib movement, and arm freedom before singing.
- Try humming while gently nodding to reinforce head-spine awareness.

- Reflect on how it feels in your singing that day.

Why I chose body mapping:

I chose Body Mapping as the focus for Lesson Plan three for several reasons. During my undergraduate studies, I was fortunate to work with a teacher who was also certified in the Alexander Technique, allowing me to experience both private and group classes. Like Feldenkrais, the Alexander Technique offered me effective, practical tools for developing awareness through movement, relieving unnecessary tension, and rebuilding functional movement patterns. These experiences have remained some of the most impactful learning moments in my life, and I continue to use simple principles from these modalities in my teaching today.

During my master's program, I was newly introduced to Body Mapping, which has its origins in the Alexander Technique developed by F. M. Alexander (1869–1955). While the Alexander Technique focuses on conscious control of movement and the prevention of habitual tension, Body Mapping was developed by Barbara Conable, who recognized that musicians often have inaccurate perceptions, or "maps," of their anatomy, leading to unnecessary tension and inefficiency in movement. She formalized Body Mapping as a systematic approach to teaching anatomical accuracy to musicians, expanding upon the Alexander Technique's benefits and making it more accessible within music pedagogy.

What I appreciate about Body Mapping is its focus on empowering musicians through accurate information and awareness of their bodies. I have noticed that my own perception of my body has evolved significantly over the years as I have become more present, gained knowledge in anatomy and physiology, and developed new movement patterns. My mental map of my body continues to change as my awareness deepens.

Having worked with voice students for over 15 years, I have observed how often students' perceptions of what is happening in their bodies differ from the realities of physiology. Body Mapping offers a gentle yet effective way to align perception with function, supporting healthier singing without overwhelming students or delving into emotional depths that they may not be prepared to navigate in a lesson. It can provide a constructive focus that can

help students redirect attention away from negative self-talk or discouragement that can arise when they hold themselves to unrealistic standards.

Body Mapping can encourage students to think about and feel their bodies with curiosity rather than judgment, shifting their attention from “what should be happening” to noticing “what is happening” with accuracy and kindness. This could help students develop a healthier, more embodied relationship with their singing and themselves.

Appendix N: Sample Lesson Feedback Questions

I designed the participant feedback questionnaire using principles from qualitative and arts-based research to capture experiential, embodied, and reflective responses to the interventions trialed in singing lessons. Informed by interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approaches, the questionnaire includes open-ended prompts to allow participants to articulate emotional, cognitive, and somatic experiences in their own words. Phenomenological analysis seeks to explore how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences, particularly how they perceive and describe internal states such as emotion, awareness, and bodily sensation (Smith et al., 2009).

I ultimately had five participants complete all three lessons and provide detailed feedback. To protect their privacy and encourage candid responses, I kept their identities anonymous and referred to them only as Participant 1 through Participant 5.

Participant Feedback Questionnaire – Emotional Interference in Singing Study

Please fill this out before and after each lesson. Your honest responses are extremely helpful to my research. Thank you!

Lesson 1: Baseline and First Intervention

1. What are some common emotional or physical feelings you experience before or during voice lessons that you think might hamper your singing technique or progress?
2. How did you feel before this lesson? (physically and emotionally)
3. How did you feel during the lesson?
4. How did you feel after the lesson?
5. Were there any moments during the lesson that felt particularly effective in helping you focus, release tension, or access your voice more freely? What do you think made them effective?
6. Were there any moments that felt ineffective or unhelpful? What do you think might have contributed to that?
7. Did you notice any physical sensations that changed throughout the lesson (e.g., breath, muscle tension, jaw, throat, posture)? Please describe.

8. Did the calming technique we used today affect your singing or sense of ease? If so, how?

Lessons 2–3: Technique Comparison and Follow-Up

(Repeat this set for each subsequent lesson.)

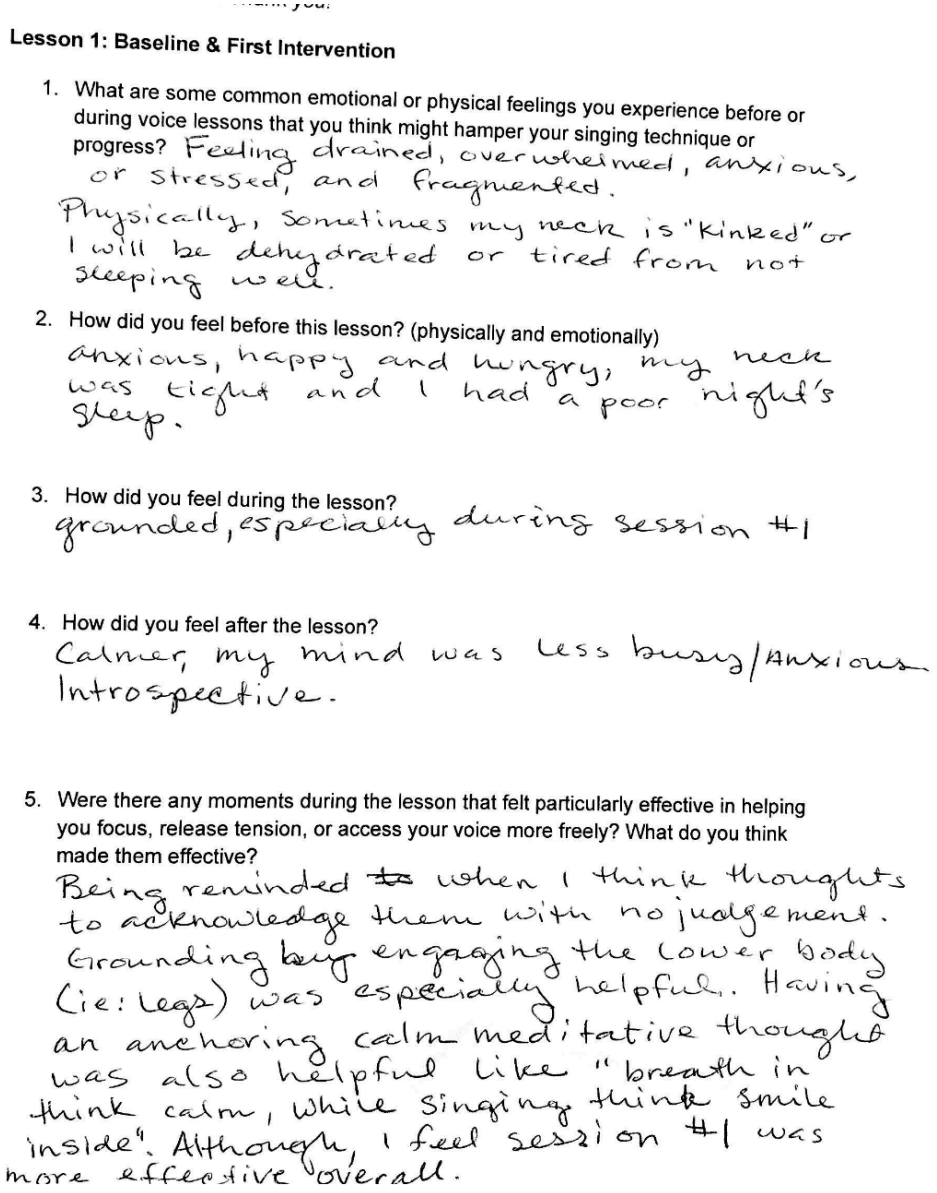
1. Compared to last time, how did today's approach feel? (More effective? Less? About the same?)
2. Do you feel like anything from today's session would be helpful to incorporate into your regular practice or warm-up? Why or why not?

Optional Reflection After Final Lesson

1. Looking back over all four lessons, which calming technique(s) were most helpful for you and why?
2. Were any of the techniques noticeably not helpful or even counterproductive for your singing?
3. Did any technique improve your ability to stay present, manage emotions, or reduce tension in performance situations?
4. Would you be interested in using any of these tools in future lessons or performances?

Appendix O: Sample Lesson Feedback

Participant 1



Thank you.

Lesson 1: Baseline & First Intervention

1. What are some common emotional or physical feelings you experience before or during voice lessons that you think might hamper your singing technique or progress? Feeling drained, overwhelmed, anxious, or stressed, and fragmented.
Physically, sometimes my neck is "kinked" or I will be dehydrated or tired from not sleeping well.
2. How did you feel before this lesson? (physically and emotionally)
anxious, happy and hungry, my neck was tight and I had a poor night's sleep.
3. How did you feel during the lesson?
grounded, especially during session #1
4. How did you feel after the lesson?
Calmer, my mind was less busy/Anxious. Introspective.
5. Were there any moments during the lesson that felt particularly effective in helping you focus, release tension, or access your voice more freely? What do you think made them effective?
Being reminded ~~to~~ when I think thoughts to acknowledge them with no judgement. Grounding by engaging the lower body (ie: legs) was especially helpful. Having an anchoring calm meditative thought was also helpful like "breath in think calm, while singing think smile inside". Although, I feel session #1 was more effective overall.

6. Were there any moments that felt ineffective or unhelpful? What do you think might have contributed to that?

No. It was more of a question of what helped more vs. the other.

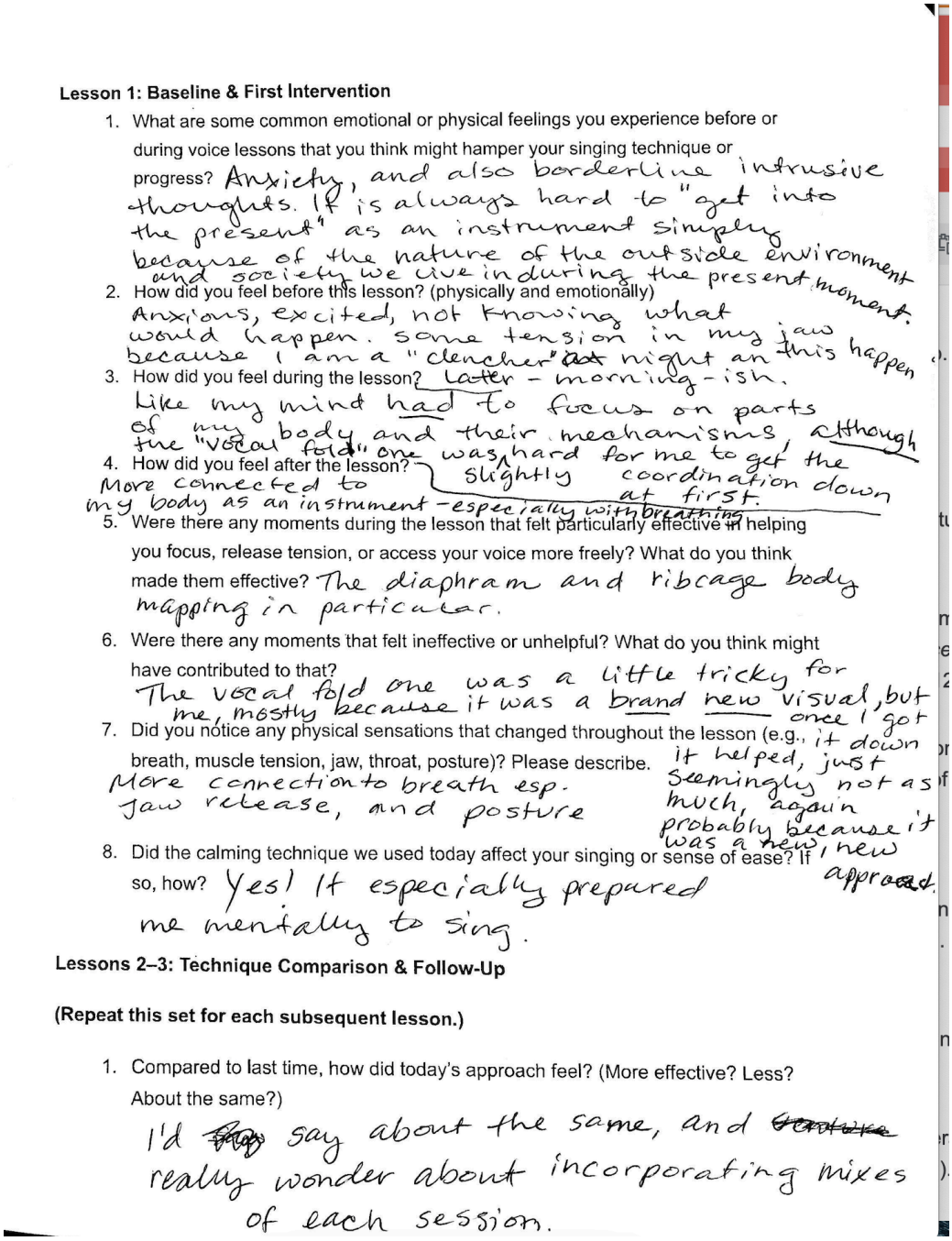
7. Did you notice any physical sensations that changed throughout the lesson (e.g., breath, muscle tension, jaw, throat, posture)? Please describe.

During session #1 I noticed I was very right dominant, and it was a challenge to isolate my left side at first. During session #2 keeping my hand on my chest + abdomen was more helpful preventing tension than when I didn't have them there

8. Did the calming technique we used today affect your singing or sense of ease? If so, how?

Yes! I feel it blastly helped prepare my body as an instrument both physically but especially mentally to sing.

This is Participant 1's response for Lesson 3, although the questionnaire heading incorrectly says Lesson 1 again.



Lesson 1: Baseline & First Intervention

1. What are some common emotional or physical feelings you experience before or during voice lessons that you think might hamper your singing technique or progress? Anxiety, and also borderline intrusive thoughts. It is always hard to "get into the present" as an instrument simply because of the nature of the outside environment and society we live in during the present moment.
2. How did you feel before this lesson? (physically and emotionally) Anxious, excited, not knowing what would happen. some tension in my jaw because I am a "clencher" ~~not~~ might an this happen
3. How did you feel during the lesson? Later - morning-ish. Like my mind had to focus on parts of my body and their mechanisms, although the "vocal fold" one was hard for me to get the
4. How did you feel after the lesson? slightly coordination down at first. More connected to my body as an instrument - especially with breathing
5. Were there any moments during the lesson that felt particularly effective in helping you focus, release tension, or access your voice more freely? What do you think made them effective? The diaphram and ribcage body mapping in particular.
6. Were there any moments that felt ineffective or unhelpful? What do you think might have contributed to that? The vocal fold one was a little tricky for me, mostly because it was a brand new visual, but once I got it down it helped, just seemingly not as much, again probably because it was a new, new approach.
7. Did you notice any physical sensations that changed throughout the lesson (e.g., breath, muscle tension, jaw, throat, posture)? Please describe. More connection to breath esp. jaw release, and posture
8. Did the calming technique we used today affect your singing or sense of ease? If so, how? Yes! It especially prepared me mentally to sing.

Lessons 2–3: Technique Comparison & Follow-Up

(Repeat this set for each subsequent lesson.)

1. Compared to last time, how did today's approach feel? (More effective? Less? About the same?) I'd ~~Beg~~ say about the same, and ~~I would like~~ really wonder about incorporating mixes of each session.

2. Do you feel like anything from today's session would be helpful to incorporate into your regular practice or warm-up? Why or why not?

Yes, ~~the vibrato visualization~~, all honestly have their value, whether it's with breath, beginning a phrase or posture.

Optional Reflection After Final Lesson

1. Looking back over all four lessons, which calming technique(s) were most helpful for you and why? Oh boy, I could see how it would depend on the day, all were helpful in one way or another, but if I had to choose, I'd say session #1
2. Were any of the techniques noticeably not helpful or even counterproductive for your singing? None were counterproductive

3. Did any technique improve your ability to stay present, manage emotions, or reduce tension in performance situations?

4. Would you be interested in using any of these tools in future lessons or performances? yes, all

Participant 2

Participant Feedback Questionnaire – Emotional Interference in Singing Study
Please fill this out before and after each lesson. Your honest responses are extremely helpful to my research. Thank you!

Lesson 1: Baseline & First Intervention

1. What are some common emotional or physical feelings you experience before or during voice lessons that you think might hamper your singing technique or progress?

I often feel like I can't get a deep enough breath depending on my stress levels about other aspects of my life. If I haven't warmed up or practiced in a while I feel shame when I start again because I'm not at the level I know I could be if I had been practicing.

2. How did you feel before this lesson? (physically and emotionally)

I felt physically tired from a full day of work, but emotionally I was doing well. I carry a baby around for work, but I also take her on walks which helps my heart health and breathing.

3. How did you feel during the lesson?

I felt good! It had been a while since I had taken a lesson and receiving guidance and feedback from my teacher was awesome. I love the safe space created where I can be my "weird" self and not feel judged.

4. How did you feel after the lesson?

I felt inspired to continue practicing! It felt good to know that even without regular lessons I had achieved a high enough level of awareness of my own instrument that I am able to produce a healthy sound.

5. Were there any moments during the lesson that felt particularly effective in helping you focus, release tension, or access your voice more freely? What do you think made them effective?

I liked the stacking of sensations. So starting seated and focusing on just the lungs and breath first, then going up to a standing position to add grounding the feet with the breath, and then the arms.

6. Were there any moments that felt ineffective or unhelpful? What do you think might have contributed to that?

I didn't really feel like stepping forward and backward was doing much for me. Then again it was interesting to notice the lack of sensation I have in my hips. I'm not sure.

7. Did you notice any physical sensations that changed throughout the lesson (e.g., breath, muscle tension, jaw, throat, posture)? Please describe.

Lessons 2–4: Technique Comparison & Follow-Up
(Repeat this set for each subsequent lesson.)

1. How did you feel before this lesson?
Rushed out the door. Overwhelmed, but in a good way.

2. How did you feel during the lesson?
Good! A bit distracted I think, but not by anything specific. I think it was more that my mind had less bandwidth.

3. How did you feel after the lesson?
Also good. Less accomplished than the first lesson but again I think my overall state was not conducive to absorbing as much as last time.

4. Was today's calming technique familiar or new to you?
It was familiar, from therapy sessions and meditation and yoga.

5. Did today's calming technique help you feel more grounded, expressive, or vocally free? Please explain.
Mmmm…. Not really? I think the "without changing anything" part was distracting and felt counterintuitive to what I usually do for lessons, which is to be aware in order to correct.

6. Were there any moments that stood out as especially helpful or challenging?
I thought the imagery of singing with an inner smile was counter productive in my case specifically because I tend to sing wide and so it was a challenge to sing tall but also think about an inner smile

7. Did you notice any shifts in your physical sensations or awareness during the Lesson?
I was wearing a dress (didn't have time to change), so I was aware that my body wanted to stretch and squat but I felt uncomfortable doing so in the dress.

8. Compared to last time, how did today's approach feel? (More effective? Less? About the same?)
The first lesson approach felt more effective, but that could be affected by my state during the lessons

9. Do you feel like anything from today's session would be helpful to incorporate into your regular practice or warm-up? Why or why not?
I think mindfulness at the end of a session, lesson, or practice is a good one to incorporate, to help ease any feelings of frustration or judgement (if there are any).

Lessons 3: Technique Comparison & Follow-Up

1. How did you feel before this lesson?
Pretty good! I had a day off so I was able to do some yoga, practice, and warm up before my lesson in the evening.

2. How did you feel during the lesson?
Also really good. I had the energy and brain capacity to really concentrate and be present.

3. How did you feel after the lesson?
Tired but in a good way. Like after a really good session in the gym.

4. Was today's calming technique familiar or new to you?
Nope.

5. Did today's calming technique help you feel more grounded, expressive, or vocally free? Please explain.
Yes. It reinforced the breathing that I did for my yoga session earlier that afternoon and helped me feel more balanced (physically) and grounded.

6. Were there any moments that stood out as especially helpful or challenging?
The body mapping for the ribs was a good reminder. I forgot that the ribs didn't just move outward, but also umbrella'd upward.

7. Did you notice any shifts in your physical sensations or awareness during the Lesson?
A key takeaway for me from the lesson was exploring and trying to become aware of a space near my ears and jaw joint. Although I was not able to completely be aware of it, there were moments during phonation where I did sense it.

8. Compared to last time, how did today's approach feel? (More effective? Less? About the same?)
I still felt like the first lesson was the most helpful. This lesson's approach with body mapping I feel will be very helpful for singers who don't yet have an accurate map of the parts of the body involved in singing, as well as what goes on with those parts.

9. Do you feel like anything from today's session would be helpful to incorporate into your regular practice or warm-up? Why or why not?
Yes, it's a good reminder to do a quick checklist of my body map (even just a few seconds) before I begin singing.

Optional Reflection After Final Lesson

1. Looking back over all four lessons, which calming technique(s) were most helpful for you—and why?

The one from the first lesson that specifically had you starting in a seated position, stacking sensations. I felt like it was a really good transitionary technique to help the singer separate whatever is happening in life, and become mindful of the decision to have a singing practice/lesson/session.

2. Were any of the techniques noticeably not helpful or even counterproductive for your Singing?

I think the “notice without changing anything” for the breathing from lesson two was not helpful. I much rather the one from lesson 3 that said “notice without judgement”.

3. Did any technique improve your ability to stay present, manage emotions, or reduce tension in performance situations?

Yes, I believe the stacking of sensations is a great way of coming back to the room and the present. So starting from the feet and working my way up the body as a way to check in and do a quick reset whenever I feel discord arise internally be they emotional, physical, etc.

4. Would you be interested in using any of these tools in future lessons or performances?

I think incorporating body mapping as a teacher is a useful tool as a way to assess if the students have an accurate map as well as a reminder maybe once every two to three lessons. Using movement to assist in singing (bringing hands up like balloon tied, etc.) is also a great tool for singers who may have trouble relaxing the body or are unable to get their heads out of a judgemental state (can help distract them). Honestly they all have a purpose, it just depends on the singer and how they or I feel that day, which is why having tools like this is great. The bigger the toolbox, the more different problems can be fixed.

Participant 3

Lesson 1: Baseline and First Intervention

1. Lately I've been feeling a lot of shame before my lessons which hampers my singing technique/progress. Being tired or stressed out from work/life have also been physical impairments.

2. I was feeling all of the above before the first lesson, and it's safe to say all of the following lessons as well

3. I felt aware of how my feelings above were affecting the way I held my body, but in a neutral and humorous way because I could immediately see how the stress was affecting me physically.

4. After the lesson I felt a little more calm and introspective. I felt a lot more aware of my body

5. The moment when we focused on breathing without changing it was when I really noticed how shallow my breathing has become, I also became acutely aware of my lack of core strength and how that was adding to my shallow breathing and spine/back pain and tension

6. There weren't any ineffective parts I noted.

7. I noticed that improving my posture and engaging my core helped with breathing during the lesson

8. My sense of ease wasn't affected in the lesson as it was happening, but the awareness it brought me about my body has been helping me to focus on and mentally explore the way I am allowing stress to affect my body/singing a lot since the lesson.

Lesson 2 - Mindfulness

1. Compared to last time this approach was more effective in calming me during because I am familiar with mindfulness exercises, but I had a particular focus on all the parts of my body I noticed in the last lesson (breathing, core, shoulder tension, posture)

2. I definitely think it would be a good idea for me to engage in mindfulness exercises to destress before engaging in singing

Lesson 3 - body mapping

1. This lesson further expanded upon all of the above in my awareness of my body, particularly in how when I start to get stressed about a note not coming out that my shoulders and neck tense more and I forget to breathe properly, so it's a good idea to take a second to calmly reset before trying again.

2. I accidentally answered this one above lol, pause, relax all the tensed muscles, calmly try again.

Condensed version of the reflection:

These lessons came at a crucial time during my life and current singing journey so they helped me to focus on a lot of the issues I've been struggling with listed above and during lessons, I felt like the awareness of how my life has taken a toll on my body and subsequently singing capabilities is the first step in the work I'd like to put in, and while my journey has been slow going, I do plan to implement the tools I learned in all the lessons on my singing journey

Participant 4

Lesson 1: Baseline and First Intervention

1. What are some common emotional or physical feelings you experience before or during voice lessons that you think might hamper your singing technique or progress?

Anxiety, nervousness

2. How did you feel before this lesson? (physically and emotionally)

   nervous

3. How did you feel during the lesson? Nervous at first but then the beginning exercises brought me more into my body and I felt more calm

4. How did you feel after the lesson? More calm than usual, and also really tall! I felt elongated and light.

5. Were there any moments during the lesson that felt particularly effective in helping you focus, release tension, or access your voice more freely? What do you think made them effective?

   Feeling breath without judgment was difficult but freeing, and also breathing deep into the hips helped me feel like I had more breath to use. I didn't feel like I was trying to get big breaths, they just happened. I don't know what made it effective, maybe occupying my mind thinking about the imagery instead of other things I am anxious about?

6. Were there any moments that felt ineffective or unhelpful? What do you think might have contributed to that? No, some activities were difficult, like non judgment during the process, I have a lot of thoughts judging myself and wondering if I am doing things right.

7. Did you notice any physical sensations that changed throughout the lesson (e.g., breath, muscle tension, jaw, throat, posture)? Please describe.

   I felt grounded and light at the same time, and elongated through my core.

8. Did the calming technique we used today affect your singing or sense of ease? If so, how?

   Yes, I was much more calm during my lesson than usual.

Lessons 2–3: Technique Comparison and Follow-Up

(Repeat this set for each subsequent lesson.)

1. Compared to last time, how did today's approach feel? (More effective? Less? About the same?)

Lesson 2: Different but good! I liked the imagery of lesson 1 but I still felt like the meditation at the beginning helped calm my mind and bring me into my body. It was still hard to be non judgemental, but it was easier than the first time and maybe faster to get to a non judgmental place.

Lesson 3: Using our hands to coordinate what was happening inside with ribs, diaphragm (I learned where and what this is!), and vocal cords were both helpful and difficult. It was helpful to see what different parts of my body were doing when I sing. It was sometimes hard to remember to do the outside movement while thinking about singing, especially the diaphragm exercise, it was hard to remember the flat hand was the inhale and the rounded hand was the exhale. I think that thinking about all of these improved my singing though, it was deeper and easier to sing.

2. Do you feel like anything from today's session would be helpful to incorporate into your regular practice or warm-up? Why or why not?

   Lesson 2: Yes, I think it would be good for me to make time to meditate more regularly or before singing, even for a short time.

   Lesson 3: Yes! I think that using one or more of these would help me connect to my body when I sing and be a way to make it easier to sing without thinking about all the things I am "supposed to be thinking about" while singing.

Optional Reflection After Final Lesson

1. Looking back over all four lessons, which calming technique(s) were most helpful for you and why? I really loved all of them. They brought different things to my singing and my mind and I hope to have my teacher use them more in our future lessons.

2. Were any of the techniques noticeably not helpful or even counterproductive for your singing? The diaphragm movement was hard to do, but I think it would be helpful if I practiced and the movement became second nature.

3. Did any technique improve your ability to stay present, manage emotions, or reduce tension in performance situations? Yes! All of them.

4. Would you be interested in using any of these tools in future lessons or performances? Yes!