



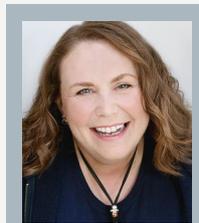
excellent women

NADINE COOPER'S TUNELESS CHOIRS SHOW THE PLEASURE THAT COMES FROM DOING THINGS JUST FOR THE LOVE OF IT

Whether you enjoy belting out the latest hits in the car or look forward to joining in carols at Christmas, singing helps us feel relaxed, happy and connected to others. But many of us feel too ashamed of our voices to sing in a more 'formal' way. Meet Nadine Cooper, who wanted to help others get over this impression and to embrace the benefits of singing. The very first Tuneless Choir was created in 2016, a singing group created for those that love to sing purely for the pleasure of it.

Nadine loved singing as a child. But that changed when she was 12 years old. "My music teacher put his hand on my arm during singing class and asked me to stop as I was ruining it for everyone else," she recalls. It wasn't until, as an adult, she met Bernie Bracha, an organiser of community choirs in the West Bridgford area of Nottingham. Not only did she convince Nadine that she should start singing again but also that there were others like her, who enjoyed singing but felt intimidated by the pressure and expectation of a choir. So, they decided to organise a session specifically for the tuneless – a term used to describe those that lack the practice, ability or confidence to sing in tune.

The session was a hit. Nadine was far from alone: in fact, it's inspired 30 more Tuneless Choirs across the country. By giving people the space to sing, they're getting all the physical, emotional and



Nadine Cooper is the founder of Tuneless Choirs, singing groups for those who love to sing purely for the pleasure, and with no pressure or expectation to improve.

social benefits, regardless of 'quality'. There are certain conditions that are improved by singing, like COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and dementia, while many choir members find it improves stress, anxiety and depression. The Tuneless Choirs have become a force for good in other ways, too: they've jointly raised over £25,000 for the mental health charity MIND over the past two years.

Nadine's attitude is one that can be applied across much more than singing: she's a great advocate of just doing things because they bring you joy. "Everything that we try and do now, even if it's supposed to be relaxing, so often turns into a competition," she explains. "If we bake cakes, we think they should look like they're on *Bake Off*, or if we enjoy running, we feel like we need to run marathons." We could all do with raising our voices in praise of her philosophy: "We need to remember to do things simply for the pleasure and relaxation of it."

At time of printing, Tuneless Choir was holding Zoom singalongs and hoping to begin meeting in person again in September, subject to government guidelines. Find out more at tunelesschoir.com. **S**

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