

STUDY GUIDE: Syreeta Butler

This study guide is to support virtual and in-person classes for students and teachers inspired by the movie *Respect* about the life of Aretha Franklin.

Overview

Syreeta Butler gives a master class that is intriguing and informative. Have you ever wondered who takes artists and arts professionals (producers, agents, managers) through a journey of self-discovery or emotional and mental wellness? The journey for Creatives can be challenging. One of the most important people with whom entertainers work and trust is their therapist.

Syreeta Butler is a licensed marriage and family therapist in the music industry. She has worked with some of the biggest names in the music industry. She knew she wanted to be a therapist—and became a psychologist instead of a psychiatrist—because she didn't want to prescribe medicine. She received her bachelor's degree at California State University, Northridge, and then moved to the San Francisco area to attend a private school with a special program in counseling psychology using a natural holistic medicine approach. Her work involves interacting with music artists and the professionals around music artists, such as recording company executives. These professionals also include those who work on music projects as producers, writers, engineers, and concert production staff.

Syreeta Butler offers insights to why her work is a necessary element in the constellation of support and guidance needed by professionals in the entertainment industry. She debunks the misperceptions held by some about her field. This is an informative talk for students interested in routes to careers in arts and entertainment that don't require being in front of the camera or on stage, and still have a huge impact in the lives of others.

Objectives

A career in the entertainment industry can be developed out of many kinds of interest. If someone has an interest in music and music education the possibilities cover many intersections of other fields.

Students can learn the following:

1. The role of education.
2. Finding where your interests intersect.
3. What is the role of wellness?
4. How to develop a career from your passion.
5. Choosing a career path.
6. Aspects of the entertainment industry for non-performers.
7. Advanced: Skill-building in intercultural maturity.

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Essential Questions for Reflection Critical Thinking

1. How might you use Syreeta Butler’s strategy for choosing a career in which you love your work?
2. What does it mean to support people in the music industry with your professional training?
3. Why is it important to understand how mental health and wellness impacts the lives of people?

Connect to the Curriculum

English Language Arts:

Journal Prompts:

- What surprised you about Syreeta Butler’s background?
- What skills from Language Arts do therapists use?

Reflection: Syreeta talked about pivotal moments in her life that helped confirm her calling to be a therapist. Which pivotal moments in your life can you use as inspiration for a career?

Social Studies:

A community is a group of people connected by something they share. How do people in the music community of all genders, abilities, and ethnicities need emotional and mental wellness support? Support your answer with evidence.

‘What If’ Questions:

1. What does Syreeta Butler mean by community and what roles do people play in the community(ies) she describes?
2. How might the music industry change if artists were required to have therapists on their creative teams?
3. What do you think that Syreeta Butler means when she speaks about purpose and calling?
4. What does Syreeta Butler mean by “betting on you?”

The Arts: Music, Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts:

In a musical setting, improvisation is the collective or individual music created by making up new melodies to fit the structure of a song. It is a vehicle by which a performer demonstrates his/her mastery. Improvisation is common in African-based music, like Jazz, R&B, Hip-Hop, and Gospel. Improvisation is also used in many Classical art forms. Identify improvisation in songs you know.

Syreeta Butler uses improvisation in her work as a therapist by doing something called “creating space”. This space allows artists to feel safe, develop ideas, and organize their creative thoughts. Discuss what types of environments help you to study, organize ideas, or be creative and invent something new or different.

People can also work in their careers using the concept of improvisation. Discuss how improvisation can be a way of thinking about your life. What does it look like if one creates from a mindset of learning and manifesting opportunities?

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Developing Your Ideas:

Syreeta talked about trusting her ideas and vision for using her work as a therapist to make sure Creatives feel supported while making their art.

1. The three things Syreeta says are important to create are: a) a space for everyone to feel Safe, b) feel Loved and c) feel heard. What are your ideas for creating these three types of situations in your life?
2. Name 3 accomplishments in your life for which you are most proud. How might you turn these accomplishments into a career?

Suggested Student Activities

Activity 1a: What Do You Know?

Before viewing the master class, students brainstorm facts that they already know about mental and emotional wellness for people in the music industry.

Activity 1b: What Do You Want to Know?

Students generate a list of at least ten questions that they would like to know about mental and emotional wellness for people in the music industry.

Activity 1c: What Did You Learn?

After viewing the master class, students review answers gleaned from Syreeta's discussion from the list of ten+ questions.

Activity 2:

Active Listening. Prior to viewing the master class: student's brainstorm associations they have for each of the program's key terms. After viewing the master class: students discuss their definitions of each term.

- Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Family Therapist
- Holistic
- Wellness
- Mental Health
- Depression
- Sadness
- Self-Awareness

Sample Lesson Plan

Create a mock record company that matches the vision that Syreeta described as an ideal company, Just Be, supporting mental health and wellness for artists.

Objectives

View the master class video a second time. This will help you hear things you may have missed in the first listening.

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1. Discuss the possible name of the new recording company your class will create.
2. Write individually, your interpretation of what a record company with a unit designated to support the mental health of artists would do.
3. Discuss roles that students can create. Design the jobs in the mental health and wellness unit of the mock record company.
4. Create a list of tasks, a timeline, and materials needed (props, supplies) for the mental health unit.
5. Stage an Open House or Grand Opening of your new mock record company's mental health and wellness unit.

Materials Needed

- Video player & speakers
- Board, eraser, and markers/chalk
- Loose leaf paper or journal

Process

1. Re-Watch the Syreeta Butler master class
2. Complete the following tasks:
 - a. Develop a tool for choosing a name for this portion of the business. Be sure to consider everyone's suggestions.
 - b. Create a method for making decisions. Be sure to match tasks with your peer's strengths.
3. Discuss necessary steps for creating the mock record company
4. Write a press release about your (mock) record company.
5. Share your ideas with another class.

Ideas for future activities

- Make a Playlist of the artists Syreeta mentions.
- Put on a presentation with a Playlist Reveal party

Advanced Discussions

Intercultural maturity is the ability to communicate and behave with people who are different from you. How would an artist demonstrate and promote the ability to get along with people who are different from themselves in gender, ethnicity, or country of origin?

Resources and Materials

Meeting Of The Minds: Why The Music & Mental Wellness Industries Are Syncing Up Now More Than Ever: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cathyolson/2020/08/18/meeting-of-the-minds-why-the-music--mental-wellness-industries-are-syncing-up-now-more-than-ever/?sh=745788956d8e>

The Music Industry's Wellness Pivot: A New Wave of Chill-out, Meditative Music to Calm Us During the Pandemic: <https://www.globalwellnesssummit.com/trendium/the-music-industrys-wellness-pivot-a-new-wave-of-chill-out-meditative-music/>

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