

Review: Hendricks, K. S. (2025). Daring to Care with Music Education

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Book Reviewed: Hendricks, K. S. (2025). *Daring to care with music education: Pedagogies for authentic connection and musical engagement*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197777589.001.0001Abstract>

Introduction

Karin S. Hendricks's *Daring to Care with Music Education* is a compelling and timely contribution to the growing discourse on ethics of care in education. In an era where educational spaces are increasingly challenged by standardization, dehumanization, and performative metrics, this book dares to foreground *care* as a pedagogical and philosophical imperative. Drawing on various theoretical frameworks, narratives, critical inquiry, pedagogies, and lived experiences, the book proposes care not as an optional “soft skill” but as the very heart of music teaching and learning. Hendricks offers not only a scholarly exploration of care ethics but also a companionable voice that feels almost like a trusted colleague or friend. Across nine accessible chapters, the book interlaces philosophical frameworks, personal reflections, case studies, and practical strategies, inviting readers into a dialogue rather than delivering a prescription. What emerges is a text that both challenges and encourages, offering moments of insight and pauses for reflection that affirm music education as a relational, inclusive, and transformative practice.

With contributions from colleagues and case studies that illustrate care in action, the book invites readers to wrestle with the tensions of vulnerability, authority, well-being, and change. What emerges is a reminder that music education is not only about skill acquisition or aesthetic achievement but also about cultivating human connection, humane care, belonging, and collective flourishing.

Foundations of “Care”

The opening chapters lay a philosophical foundation. In Chapter 1, Hendricks conceptualizes care through three prepositions—*caring about*, *caring for*, and *caring with*. This framework provides both an analytical lens and a pedagogical roadmap. Hendricks resists presenting care as sentimental or indulgent; instead, she situates it as rigorous, intentional, and deeply ethical (Noddings, 2013).

One of the most striking insights of these early chapters is Hendricks's insistence that teacher self-care is integral, not ancillary. She critiques the idealized trope of the teacher as self-sacrificing martyr, reminding readers that burnout and secondary trauma are real threats that undermine the possibility of genuine care. This is an excellent reminder that without us (as pedagogues), the job will still go on — but students would lose a unique and irreplaceable facet of learning: us. This framing positions teacher well-being not as indulgence but as an ethical necessity.

Chapter 2 develops this foundation by examining authentic and reciprocal relationships in the music classroom. Hendricks highlights the paradox of young people today: digitally hyper-

connected yet profoundly lonely. Drawing on disciplines such as neuroscience and psychology, she demonstrates how music classrooms can serve as sites of repair, where students experience a sense of belonging through shared musicking (Small, 1998). The discussion of reciprocity is especially insightful. Hendricks challenges transactional notions of care, suggesting that its true measure lies not in equal return but in whether it is genuinely received. This invites educators and learners to value the act of being fully engaged in the moment rather than merely striving for results.

Her exploration of vulnerability and humility is among the book's most generative contributions. Introducing the concept of unselfed humility, drawn from ecological thinking, Hendricks calls on teachers to release their ego and embrace attentiveness, allowing student voices to shape the learning space. As I reflected on this, I was reminded of a course I once taught to preservice generalist teachers, many of whom began with little to no confidence in music. Through small practices—such as anonymous feedback, handwritten notes, and student-created affirmations—the class gradually transformed into a community where they felt more confident over time. Hendricks's articulation of vulnerability and trust resonated deeply with that experience, providing language for what I had sensed but struggled to name: that trust cannot be demanded, only modelled and lived.

Chapter 3 advances the discussion of care in music education by shifting attention from the creation of caring relationships to the more complex task of sustaining them in ways that are reciprocal, responsive, and enduring. A significant contribution of this chapter lies in its discussion of trauma-informed care. Hendricks emphasizes the importance of viewing student behaviour through a trauma lens while avoiding the danger of reducing students to their trauma histories. Instead, she calls for environments that affirm strengths, validate identities, and co-construct trust. Strategies such as peer mentoring, designed to create both safe and brave spaces, exemplify how care can be embedded both structurally and relationally. This chapter emphasizes the importance of reciprocity and responsiveness in demonstrating authentic care, particularly for students with diverse abilities, by promoting genuine inclusion. This emphasis resonates with Noddings's (2005) argument that care is authentic only when it is recognized and received by the cared-for. The examples illustrate that meaningful care is not a one-directional model of "we give to you," but a collaborative stance of "we learn with you." This perspective deepens the book's broader argument for care as a sustained, relational practice in music education.

Chapter 4 extends the prepositions of care by introducing a fourth: *caring through music*. Here, Hendricks illustrates how music can become a vehicle for social good, healing, and advocacy. From utilizing repertoire to support causes to reimagining concerts as spaces for empathy and connection, the chapter demonstrates how musical expression can evolve beyond

technical mastery toward ethical engagement. This framework challenges deficit-driven pedagogy by positioning music education as a means to foster empathy, responsibility, and shared flourishing.

Identity, Inclusion, and Expressive Arts

Chapters 5–7 expand the conversation by engaging issues of identity, diversity, and culturally responsive practice. Chapter 5 critiques traditional notions of talent and giftedness, advocating for strength-based pedagogies that recognize diverse trajectories of musical growth. Hendricks challenges deficit models, calling on educators to check biases and dismantle hierarchies that privilege specific cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds. Though implicit bias is addressed broadly, the chapter might benefit from further elaboration on how race, ethnicity, and cultural capital intersect with musical expectations and assessments.

Chapter 6, co-authored with Yank’l Garcia and Tawnya Smith, provides one of the book’s most practical and inspiring contributions. The chapter illustrates how the integration of expressive arts can foster culturally responsive care in diverse classrooms. Mistakes and missteps are not hidden but offered as learning opportunities, modelling reflective practice. The chapter also clarifies the distinctions between music education and music therapy, offering valuable guidance on how educators can responsibly draw on therapeutic insights without conflating roles. I found myself recalling a moment in my own teaching when I invited students to respond to a question through any artistic medium of their choice. Their joy and creativity in expressing themselves affirmed the chapter’s point that the expressive arts open unique channels for care, self-discovery, and community building.

Chapter 7 turns explicitly to identity-responsive and identity-affirming pedagogies. Hendricks contrasts “safe spaces” with “brave spaces,” arguing that the latter invite healthy risk-taking and co-construction of learning. Drawing on intersectionality, she highlights how students’ identities are multidimensional and evolving. The chapter distinguishes between identity-responsive pedagogy and identity-affirming pedagogy, encouraging teachers to embrace practices such as microaffirmations, radical welcome, and improvisation. Particularly compelling is the reimagining of Social Emotional Learning through a caring lens, centering on identity, belonging, and agency rather than reductive competencies. The call here is both urgent and practical: to create classrooms where difference is celebrated and where students are empowered to shape their learning spaces.

Well-being, Transformation, and Change

The final two chapters expand the scope of care from personal to systemic. Chapter 8 addresses teacher well-being, a theme often marginalized in professional discourse. Hendricks

acknowledges the real stressors of music educators—burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma—and reframes self-care as a professional responsibility rather than a luxury. Hendricks offers a valuable contribution by offering practical, accessible strategies, while also critiquing the hollow rhetoric of “self-care” in overburdened contexts. Importantly, Hendricks situates well-being not only at the individual level but also at the systemic level, calling for cultures of care within institutions.

Chapter 9 concludes the book with a daring vision of change. Hendricks asks whether music education can “change the world” and responds with hope that, while no individual can transform systems alone, collective acts of care can ripple outward. We are reminded that care starts with the self and immediate surroundings, then extends to co-learners, the profession, and society. This layered model is both realistic and inspiring. She insists that daring to care requires the courage to interrogate assumptions, risk vulnerability, and imagine alternatives.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, *Daring to Care with Music Education* is a timely contribution to the field of music education. Each chapter builds on the last, moving from personal foundations of care to systemic visions of transformation. The text does not shy away from discomfort; indeed, it insists that care is most authentic when it embraces vulnerability, uncertainty, and ongoing reflection.

For music educators, this book offers both challenge and encouragement. It calls us to examine our own biases, practices, and well-being, while also equipping us with conceptual tools and practical strategies to teach more inclusively, sustainably, and courageously. For educators beyond music education, the book resonates as well, contributing to the broader discourse on relational pedagogy and care ethics.

Hendricks’s achievement is in balancing realism with hope for the future of music education. She acknowledges the fractures and harms of traditional practices yet insists that transformation is possible if we dare to care. By situating care at the center of music education, Hendricks reminds us that teaching is not merely about shaping musicians but about shaping communities, fostering belonging, and nurturing human flourishing. This is not only a book about music education; it is a manifesto for compassionate, ethical, and transformative teaching. It is a call to action: to reimagine music teaching and learning through care, humility, and shared humanity. As you read this book, I invite you to dare to care, as I continue daring to do so in my own teaching, learning, and research.

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Seyram Yawo Afealete is a Ghanaian-born music educator, researcher, and Ph.D. candidate in Music Education at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. She holds a bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, and a master's degree in Music Education from the University of Toronto, Canada. Her research examines how Ghanaian-Canadian Third Culture Kids (TCKs) construct and express their identities through music and arts-based inquiry, with particular focus on cultural identity, belonging, and the role of music in lived experiences. She has taught in early childhood, K–12, and university settings, and has facilitated community programs that integrate music, wellness, and intercultural learning. Seyram has delivered guest lectures on arts-based research, cultural perspectives in music education, leadership, and curriculum design. Beyond academia, she performs on violin, piano, and traditional Ghanaian instruments, and served as Co-Chair of the 2025 Canada-Africa Academic Collaborations Conference. Her work emphasizes community, creativity, and culturally responsive approaches to music learning, with a commitment to supporting diverse learners through music and the arts.