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### **The Soundtrack of Our Lives: Part two, Listening more deeply.**

It gently shifts the focus from remembering the music that shaped us to discovering how mindful listening can shape the way we live now:

**Session 1:** The Soundtrack of Our Lives — Reminded us how music connects us with our memories, emotions and life story.

**Session 2:** The Soundtrack of Our Lives: Listening More Deeply — We can investigate how sound, music and even silence can help us cultivate presence, peace and everyday mindfulness.

Today isn't so much about the actual music it's more an opportunity for you to **listen and notice** your own responses. Some sounds may resonate with you, others may leave you completely unmoved, some might even annoy you and that's perfectly okay. In mindfulness we're not trying to have the 'right' experience—we're simply becoming aware of the experience we're having.

**Introduction:** What fascinates me is that almost every culture throughout the ages has developed music for the same human experiences:

- Welcoming a new life.
- Marking grief and loss.
- Celebrating community.
- Connecting with nature.
- Prayer or contemplation.
- Healing emotional wounds.
- Marking the changing seasons.
- The instruments and melodies differ enormously, but the underlying human need is remarkably similar.

Long before mindfulness became a familiar word, people all over the world were using sound to comfort, to connect, to celebrate, to grieve and to find peace. The music may sound very different, but the human heart has always searched for the same things.

**Consider this:** We often think mindfulness means finding silence. But perhaps it's more accurate to say mindfulness is about changing our relationship with whatever we hear. For some people that's birdsong, for others it's traffic or 'white' noise

Many of us enjoy Margaret's 'belonging' WhatsApp group where she shares Padraig O'Moráin's daily mindfulness bells, (and other things) with us as a gentle reminder to pause. But perhaps over the summer we can become a little more adventurous and discover our own mindfulness pause bells based on sound, such as:

A blackbird's song in the garden.  
The wind rustling through the trees  
The kettle beginning to boil.  
Children laughing in the distance.  
Rain on the window.  
The click of the garden gate.  
The church clock striking the hour.  
Even the sound of our own footsteps as we walk.

There are many more. None of these sounds asks anything of us, they simply invite us to pause, to breathe, and to notice that we are here, **alive in this moment**.

**"Listening More Deeply"** doesn't have to mean listening for quieter sounds. It can mean listening with greater awareness—to music, to nature, to everyday sounds, to notice our own reactions, and even to the sounds we wish weren't there. Many people associate meditation with silence, but many people live with tinnitus, hearing loss, hyperacusis, or other conditions that make silence either unavailable or uncomfortable.

Like everything else, sound and silence have many different meanings to us individually, and is your own personal experience, and my advice as always is that there's no right or wrong ways to experience music or sounds, it is different for all of us, experiment and notice how different types of music cause different reactions and you can enhance the soundtrack of your life to bring whatever you need in each moment, or embrace silence.

This week we'll explore different types of music, some more traditional but I'll include some from around the ancient world such as Joik, from Northern Scandinavia and Khoomei from Mongolia, including the ancient language of La Gomera, it's fascinating.

While this week appears to be about *music* it's actually more about *listening*. And perhaps that's the most mindful destination of all.

My invitation is to investigate **what helps you come back to the present**. The breath gives us a pause, but experiment with what brings you back into the present moment, the awareness of now. Be curious, for some it will be birdsong, for others music, for others laughter, the sea, the rhythm of walking, a smile or simply one mindful breath might be enough. It doesn't have to be a sound, that way it doesn't really matter what type of hearing you have, you can find your trigger.

*The invitation isn't to wait for perfect quite or peace, but to meet our experiences with curiosity and kindness.*

Last meeting we discovered a Soundtrack for our group, Bruno Mars, Count on me. For me it represents the friendship of our 'belonging' group, and our YMCA group. I now have a Motto:

**"Explore gently. Choose wisely. Keep what helps".**

### **Listening More Deeply**

**Life sings a thousand songs each day,  
Some loud and bright, some soft as dew.  
The mindful heart need not choose one,  
But simply listen, fresh and new.**

**A blackbird calls, the wind replies,  
A distant bell, a gentle stream.  
Each sound invites a quiet smile,  
Each moment more than it may seem.**

**With open mind and curious soul,  
We greet each note without a plan.  
For when awareness learns to listen,  
The music lives in all we can.**