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#87 Arizona, Band Trouble, Oct 2012 (Um - oops – 981 words...)

Dear Arizona,

I thought being in a band would be fun, but we disagree so much, we never seem to make any actual music! Do you have any suggestions?

Miserably Musicless in Montana

Dear miserably Music-less,

There's this one little problem with bands – they're almost always made up of more than one person. I did see a one man band at this harvest fair I went to last month – blowing into a harmonica, strumming a banjo and dancing on a giant piano mat all at the same time, but that's pretty much the exception to the rule. Anyway, agreeing on things gets twice as hard every time you add another person to a group. And if two of those people already happen to disagree every *single* time they get together – well, let's just say it's not exactly the best recipe for making great music.

A while back, my neighbor Ollie came across this old box of instruments that his grandmother was throwing out. We started picking them up and making noise with them – then my brother and sister Tex and Indi did too, and before we knew it, we had a band! It's always worked great, cause we never take ourselves seriously, and, the only audience we ever perform in front of is my cat Cow, who I'm pretty sure cares way more about getting chin scratches between songs, then how great we sound.

But then, one day when we were practicing, we heard the doorbell ring.

"Mareya!" I said, opening the door.

"Hi," she said. "I know you weren't expecting me, but my new guitar teacher lives right across the street from you, and I called my mom to ask if I could stop by and see if you were home."

"You play guitar?" Indi said, all excitedly. "You should be in our band!"

"You guys have a band?" Mareya asked.

"Uh huh," said Indi. "You should come bring your guitar into the living room right now and play with us!"

As Indi was leading Mareya into the living room, I was getting more and more nervous by the second. You see, Mareya's an awesome friend, and I love hanging out with her – *except* when she's anywhere near Ollie. It's not that Ollie and Mareya dislike

each other, it's just that whenever they get around each other, they always take opposite sides.

Surprisingly, as soon as Mareya took out her guitar, everything went way better than I expected.

"Do you guys know this song?" She said, strumming a few notes.

"That's that treasure one I keep hearing all over the place," said Ollie. "I love that song!"

"It's really easy," said Mareya. "I can teach it to you if you want."

"I do!" Said Indi. "Me too!" Said Tex.

Mareya was way more advanced than us, but we were still able to make some halfway decent sounding background music.

"Woah! That's by far the best we've ever sounded on anything," said Ollie. "You have to join our band!"

"Okay!" Said Mareya.

"Um, are you two sure this is a good idea?" I said. "I mean – you guys don't usually get along all that well – remember?"

"This time'll be different," said Ollie.

"Definitely!" Said Mareya. "Look how smoothly everything went today! How about I check to see if I can come practice with you guys every Saturday right after my guitar lesson?"

Could it be that all my worrying was for nothing? Could it be that Ollie and Mareya's arguing days were finally over? Dream on! The very next rehearsal was beyond terrible!

"You chose the song last time," Ollie told Mareya. "This time I choose Dance All Night."

"You seriously like that song?" Asked Mareya.

"You seriously *don't* like that song?" Said Ollie.

"*Nobody* likes that song!" Said Mareya.

"So you're calling me nobody?" Said Ollie.

"Wow, overreact much?" Said Mareya.

"Only when people insult my favorite songs," said Ollie.

“Fine, we’ll play Dance All Night,” said Mareya.

“I don’t want to anymore,” said Ollie. “Now it’s just gonna seem weird.”

“What’s weird is how un-fun this is being,” said Indi.

“I agree,” said Tex. “I’m gonna go get a snack.”

“Me too!” Said Indi.

“I guess I’ll join you,” I sighed as I followed them into the kitchen.

“Why do they have to act like that?” Grumbled Tex.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I guess they really just can’t help it.”

What happened next was actually very cool. Ollie and Mareya came to join us in the kitchen.

“Do you guys want some apples and string cheese?” I asked.

“Thanks, said Mareya. “And we also have something to tell you. Ollie and I are kind of realizing that we might not exactly have the best personalities to be in a band together, so even though it was really nice of you guys to invite me, I’ve decided not to join after all.”

“But you are going to come by and play your latest songs for us, right?” said Ollie.

“Right!” Smiled Mareya.

“Um Mareya,” said Tex.

“Yes,” said Mareya.

“I’m just wondering,” said Tex. “Could you please pass the string cheese?”

So Dear Miserably Musicless, when it comes to bands, (and I guess pretty much any creative project you're doing for fun), it's great if you can work with people who you basically get along with, and even better if you have similar ideas about the kind of music or art or whatever it is you want to make. When you have little disagreements, you can try to take turns letting people have their way. But if you hardly ever agree, you might think about doing what Mareya did, and explain in a calm, friendly way why it might be a good idea for you to leave. If you keep practicing your instrument and keep your eyes open for another band, everything might just work out for the best.

