

Rock-A-Bye Babies: Music & Movement for Infants & Toddlers

The essence of this presentation is to not only provide ways to use music & movement throughout your day, but to acknowledge the magnitude of your profession. What you do is the most important work I know of. Many children in your care get their first view of the world from you. They learn about love and trust from you. Thank you for what you do.

Infants are born, seemingly, pre-wired for music and movement and that is how they learn. With hearing being the 2nd sense to develop in utero, babies are born ready and expecting to move. Everything about appropriate musical experiences is positive. Year after year, the research builds in support of the importance of music in a young child's life.

Movement is now 'moving' into the spotlight with an emphasis on increasing learning. We know that music and movement affect all areas of development, nourish the brain, can help to strengthen learning, listening, literacy, body and spatial awareness, co-ordination, language, problem solving, motor skills, and perhaps, most important create opportunities for social success and emotional well-being.

Music will enrich children's lives and tap into their creative energy. It has the power to slow things down, instantly transforming a cranky environment into one of harmony and joy. With infants often coming to programs as young as six weeks, a simple song can calm the uncertainty of the transition for baby, mom and dad. As an infant-toddler care provider, music can be your best friend.

The current focus on academics may leave the crucial role of social-emotional development behind. It is difficult for children to develop cognitively if the emotional component is not stable. Trust lays the foundation for that social-emotional piece and music can greatly enhance that sense of trust. Musical experiences can be at the core of the social connections formed between children and their significant others. Music can be a dialogue for bonding, a dance between baby and caregiver. These early musical experiences will affect the children and their families for years to come and it is a gift that will last a lifetime.

Making music is a very easy skill to learn. There just has to be somebody willing to teach it. So if you think, "What, Me Teach Music?". You can and you must. For some toddlers it may be their only form of self-expression and for some parents it may be the only tool readily available to help them out of a frustrating situation.

In our hurry up dot com world, we are sitting children as young as 12 months in front of computers. We need to nurture their natural love of music and movement. They desperately need their childhood and often, we are taking it away sooner and sooner. The media is telling us what our children need. But what is important for healthy development has not changed. Love them, hug them-hold them close, keep them safe, sing and read to them-babies too, dance with them, do open-ended art, write down their stories, tape record their songs, make eye contact with each child everyday. Take time to listen-time to just be.

But it's not just for the children. It's for everyone. Musical experiences can positively affect staff efficiency, productivity and stress levels. Invite your families for a potluck, an evening program to celebrate the seasons and to join together in Music, Movement and More.

So when all else fails, try Singing A Song and Dancing Along. It really works!
No talent necessary.

Did you know?

- By 5-6 months in utero the fetus can process sound, which stimulates muscle tone, (especially core muscles) equilibrium and flexibility. *Campbell*
- What happens during the first few months and years of life matters a lot, because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows. *Shonkoff, Jack P. & Phillips, Deborah A. (eds.) 2000*
- During the 1st year of life, rhythm is the element of music that has the greatest effect. *Ortiz*
- The brain's ability to recognize melody moving up and down is present in babies. *Balaban et al.*
- Since the fetus experiences all kinds of movements, the vestibular system is already programmed at birth to expect movement. Movement is necessary for stimulating the nervous system, with vestibular stimulation alerting, but also calming the infant-as in soothing effect that comes from rocking. *Mahler*
- Rocking is a natural tranquilizer, with the movement reminding the baby of being in the womb. In soothing infants, we introduce cadence and patterning in our voices; we rock, walk and they suck-all forms of rhythmic stimulations associated with the temporal patterning of social interaction. *Mahler*
- Hugging is a universal component of songs for little children. Thus, preparing a baby lesson that includes touching, singing and playing is not that difficult. Babies are always interested in sounds, language and music, and they thrive on contact through touch. *Mahler*
- Have children pass rhythm sticks to the beat from side to side in front of them and follow with their eyes. This teaches the eyes how to follow words in a book and prepares them for reading.
- The ability to perform cross-lateral movement is necessary to be able to read. If you want to get your child reading, music, movement and soccer (or just kicking a ball around) will do it. Don't waste your money on flash cards or other inappropriate (and unnecessary) products. Just have fun.
- The cerebellum is larger in musicians by up to about 5%. This suggests that finger exercise (as used in fingerplays for younger children) may prompt additional nerve growth. *Schlaug et al 1998*
- Music & movement activities provide vehicle to teach steady beat. Steady beat is linked to adequate linguistic development. This should be in place before Kndg. Less than 50% adults can keep steady beat. and 10% of Kndg.
- One song can appeal to all 8 of multiple intelligences. *Gardner*
- Children who lack play and touch have 20-50% smaller brains (Perry 1998)
- Standing can increase heart rate (blood flow) as much as 5-8% *Krock & Hartung 1992*
- The brain and heart are electrical and need water and oxygen to run effectively. Getting physically involved in a good song helps both organs.
- Movement is most important to increase learning. Active moving helps brain focus, practice & rewire. Novelty wakes up, repetition wires. Information Travels to the brain side to side back/front up/down. Motor, balance, vestibular developed properly. i.e. missed crawling. *Jean Blaydes Madigan*
- As we experience and learn more about the positive effects of music and touch and as we understand that affective touch combined with music is needed for healthy development and bonding, we realize that the next step is to implement music contact games in early childhood. *Mahler*

Infant-Toddler Picture and Story Books

A You're Adorable...M. Alexander
Baby Dance...Ann Taylor
Bumpety Bump...Kathy Henderson
All Fall Down-Clap Hands
Say Goodnight-Tickle...H. Oxenburry
Bedtime...Joan Blos
Big Red Barn...Margaret Wise Brown

Come Along Daisy...Jane Williams
Everywhere Babies...Susan Meyers
Eyes, Nose, Fingers & Toes...Judy Hindley
From Head to Toe...Eric Carle

Home For A Bunny...Margaret Wise Brown
Hush Little Baby...Sylvia Long
I Went Walking...Sue Williams
Jamberry...Bruce Degen

Listen To The Rain-Here Are My Hands...Bill Martin Jr.
Miss Spider's Tea Party...David Kirk
Oh My Baby, Little One...Kathy Appelt
Patrick Paints a Picture...Saviour Pirotta
Peekaboo Morning...Rachel Isadora

Raccoon Tune...Nancy Shaw
Runaway Bunny...Margaret Wise Brown
Row Your Boat (many others) Iza Trapani
Silly Sally...Audrey Wood...So Much...Trish Cooke
Snuggle Wuggle...John London...Snappy Little Farmyard

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything...Linda Williams
Ten little fingers and ten little toes...Mem Fox
Time For Bed...Mem Fox
Treasury of Poetry and Rhymes...Selected by Alistair Hedley

Water, Water...Eliose Greenfield
What Makes a Rainbow...Betty Schwartz
Where is My Baby?...H.Ziefert & S. Taback
Where is Baby's Belly Button?...Karen Katz