

## **Positive Relationships: Home learning - A parent's guide to ... music Why is listening to - and making - music important for children? Penny Tassoni explains, and suggests some activity ideas**

**by Penny Tassoni**



**Most children come into the world with a natural interest in music and rhythm.** Babies will calm to the sound of a lullaby or enjoy being rocked. One of the great things about music is the way it crosses cultures and centuries - while some of the songs and sounds have changed from generation to generation, it still remains important in childhood.

### **FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MUSIC**

Here are five things you should know about the role of music in children's lives.

**1. Listening skills:** When children listen to or join in with music, they develop good auditory discrimination skills - that is **the ability to make sense of the different sounds in our speech.** They are able to pick out individual sounds and also rhythms. These are useful skills, which are needed when children start the process of reading.

**2. Social skills:** Musical activities such as joining in with singing or playing games with music seem to help children's social skills. It is great way for young children to be with others and have fun. **Hearing an adult sing to them can encourage them to make eye contact** and to maintain attention.

**3. Mood changing:** Music is known to affect our emotions and mood. Most parents instinctively know this as they often rock or sing to their babies. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that 'feel-good' hormones, known as endorphins, are released when we sing with others. This means that **singing with your child can help create a positive atmosphere.**



**4. An outlet for creativity:** Very young children can be extraordinarily creative when it comes to music. Early on, they start to improvise the words in songs or make up tunes. When given simple instruments, children will often explore the sounds that they can make with them, learning about tone and volume in the process.

**5. Brain stimulation:** It has been suggested that listening to music and being involved in making music is useful in stimulating some cognitive skills, such as concentration, attention and the ability to detect patterns and sequences. There have also been claims that maths and music are linked, but a word of caution here - there are plenty of musicians who find mathematics difficult!

### **TYPES OF MUSICAL ACTIVITY**

It can be helpful to know the different types of musical activity that are common in the early years and how they can help your child. It can also be useful to know when they may be introduced to your child. The next pages contain ideas of the types of musical experience and resources that might help your child at different ages. **It is important to remember that this is a guide only.**