



How Early Childhood Music Classes Benefit Parents

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You've already heard how music stimulates a child's musical and logical thinking skills in the early years. But a second benefit to these classes is the wonderful opportunities that arise within the music class for helping parents develop a greater bond with their children and learn how to obtain better behavior without constant confrontations.

In an era where children are overly stimulated with visual media that is often frenetic or 'hyped-up' in presentation i.e.; TV, computer programs or Internet sites, music provides an opportunity for children to develop their listening skills. They literally will close their eyes at times during class and just listen to music or rock and move to the music as they and their parents 'feel' it.

This distinction is important to both child and parent. How many times have we heard, "Johnny just won't listen to me or listen to instructions"? The very listening skills they develop in the context of music games help them develop the ability to listen and discern differences between noise and important commands. "Stop" "Put the sticks down, now." And as children advance they start to override the compulsion to continue pounding the sticks together and listen for the word cue that signals "stop" or change movement or behavior.

This is the beginning of developing the ability to reason, and control impulse behaviors that make children 'anti-social' or incorrigible in academic settings and interferes with their learning.

Additionally, the rocking, singing and dancing they do with their parents establishes a

closer and more emotionally satisfying bond between parent and child. It forces the over-booked parent to slow down and actually look at and 'feel' their own children. Making eye contact with a child and 'getting down on their level' makes true communication much easier. (As an experiment: Try kneeling on the floor as if you were a child. Have a friend stand on a stool holding your hand as if they were the parent.) First the 'parent' looks away from the child towards the door saying, "You'd better hurry or we'll be late for class. Make sure you listen to me and don't embarrass me in class!" How do you, the 'child', feel? Not very warm and loved, to be sure. Second time:

Now the parent looks directly into the child's eyes and says, "I know we're hurrying, but I can't wait for us to get to music class today. Aren't we going to have fun together?" Now how do you as a child feel?

During the class itself other issues arise that require children to be patient, follow directions and share. This is especially critical for the toddlers. When we have to take away the sticks they've been playing with, it's important that they understand that something else will take its place. They must treat the instruments with care now if they are to treat the piano respectfully later.

Making games of putting away instruments, passing out new ones and taking turns help parents to discover creative ways of getting children to comply with instructions without a confrontation.

The emotional benefits to both child and parent are sometime overwhelming—as when a child who has never spoken speaks for the first time while singing a favorite song in class. Don't miss these wonderful opportunities for creative teaching and parenting with your children!

