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Reach Out and Connect #22 Singing Our Way Through Quarantine



Singing with young children is just as important as talking and reading with them. Studies have found relationships between rhythm and language abilities, attention, development, hearing acuity, social interactions, and early math skills like patterns and one-to-one correspondence.

Music is a great way to connect with children who have autism or are developmentally delayed. Music encourages communicative behavior and can encourage interaction with others, which is something that children with autism have difficulty with.

Music Activities for Babies (birth through 1 year old)

- **Bonding** - There's incredible bonding, a warmth and a primal response to singing to a baby that is critical to their attachment development. The act of singing to your child emotionally settles the parent/caregiver as well, and there is this thing called synchronicity, where the baby and the parent end up in the same emotional space.
- **Transitions** – Babies feel safe when life is predictable. A song for waking up, sleeping, and other routine transitions and activities helps them know what comes next and helps soothe when the baby is upset.
- **Singing names** – A baby can learn their name by hearing it in songs. Try substituting your baby's name for other words in songs, so they hear their name sung over and over again.
- **Learning new words:** When you hold up a stuffed dog as you sing about a dog, baby learns to associate the name of that toy with the words you sing. When you sing about parts of the body, kiss your baby's feet or tickle their tummy, so they learn new words.



Example Activity:

- **[Singing a Lullaby before bed:](#)** Lullabies are more than just singing to a baby — there are incredible positive impacts on both the parent and the child. As previously mentioned, this is great bonding time with your young child and can help smooth the transition from daytime to nighttime.

Music Activities for Toddlers (1 year old to 3 years old)

- **Language** – Language is in itself musical, and when you sing and speak, your young child learns about words, language, and communication.
- **Rhythm and rhyme** – Music includes rhythm and rhyme, again, part of our language. Toddlers are beginning to recognize rhymes and rhythms in the songs that you sing together. This also helps toddlers form new sounds they have not made yet.
- **Listening skills** – Like reading, singing is an activity that requires listening. It's another opportunity for your child to begin to understand language and feelings expressed through language and sing-play.

Example Activity:

- **Dance Party:** One great musical activity for toddlers is to have a dance party! Play some kid friendly music and move to the beat. Clap the rhythms together or stomp to the beat with your feet. Move to the music! If the music is fast, speed up. If the music is slow and soft, move smoothly and slowly. Do a freeze dance where you stop moving when the music stops. Use scarves to move high and low and explore the space around you!



Music Activities for Preschoolers (3 years old to 5 years old)

- **New words** – At this age, your child’s vocabulary is really flourishing. While you sing with your preschooler, you introduce new vocabulary. It also helps your child sound out the words.
- **Call and Response**- This is sometimes called an echo, when the part of the song is repeated, like the song ‘Down by the Bay’ or ‘Boom Chicka Boom.’ Call and response can be a useful teaching tool, as it gives young children an opportunity to listen, imitate, explore their voice, and gain confidence in their singing.
- **Family fun** – Singing is a great way to involve older siblings as well as grandparents. Singing and playing together can be a fun family activity that brings the family closer together and makes for fun memories.

Example Activities:

- **Put on a Show:** Use finger puppets or stuffed animals to act out a favorite song or dance to a favorite tune. Or if your little one loves to play-act (as so many preschoolers do), encourage them to dress up, imagine themselves as a character and come up with their own song.
- **Using Music as a Teaching Tool:** Music therapy is also used as a teaching tool. For example, a music therapist might write lyrics about specific behavior – like, turn-taking. The therapist sings the lyrics to the melody of a song the child knows well. The idea is that the child might be better able to focus on sung information than spoken information. A good example of this is the [clean-up song!](#)

Additional Resources

- [Musical Instrument Museum](#) has a great playlist of tutorials for musical activities with young children.
- [Fun Music Activities for Preschoolers](#) has a list of 8 fun musical activities for preschoolers from freeze dance to making your own musical instruments.
- [ROR Rockin’ Through the Summer Camp](#): This summer, we created a whole week full of musical themed activities for young kids. Check out the YouTube Playlist for all the fun activities.
- [Turtle Dance Music Workshop](#): Check out the workshop we co-hosted with Turtle Dance Music too!



For any questions about the content or our virtual programming, please email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org.