

Getting in Touch through Music

How can we use music to include positive, intentional touch in our daily teaching?

There is a growing body of evidence for the importance of regular touch throughout life and particularly during infancy and in the early years of care and learning. For children's optimum wellbeing and best learning, touch needs to be a continual experience throughout a child's day.

- Touch is fundamental to quality care - it supports attachment and bonding.

Touch is essential for social and emotional intelligence. Children need adequate touch to learn to be appropriate in their touch of others (i.e. empathy)

- The skin is our largest sensory organ. Touch on the skin helps to build trust in relationships and promotes kinaesthetic learning.

- Touch is relaxing, so best learning is possible. Gentle pressure and varied touch on the skin, that is enjoyable, releases serotonin, a relaxing hormone. This in turn lowers levels of

cortisol, a hormone that rises with stress and can reduce effective learning for young children.

- Touch on the skin supports the balance or vestibular system. Regular touch ties in with sensory information through movement, as our skin sends information continually to the brain about balance. Multisensory integration requires regular, touch and movement experiences throughout everyday.

We often think about soothing a baby with touch, but preschoolers have been seen to be less aggressive with adequate touch in their day. For children who resist touch or may be frightened by unfamiliar people touching them, a song, a rhyme or dance involving touch may help.

Using Music to Provide Touch Opportunities.

For Babies: rocking, cuddling, stroking, or patting to the beat of a lullaby.

Bouncing on a carers lap to a rhyme eg Humpty Dumpty

Massage as we sing during routines like nappy change.

Twirling and lifting a child up and down to dance music.

Tickling, tapping and creeping on a child's hands, feet or tummy to a rhyme or song e.g. Round and Round the Garden.

For Preschoolers

Massage to music on themselves (stroking, patting, tapping, squeezing, sweeping, swishing movements)

Fingerplays, as the fingers have many brain connections and give a lot of sensory information.

Holding hands in a circle dance, or create trains holding at the shoulders or waist.

Clapping hands with a partner to a rhyme or song.

For older preschoolers they may be able to massage a friend if their touch is appropriate. Using varied props such as ribbons, scarves, parachute in musical experiences to provide touch with objects that have varied textures.