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How to help your child love music!

Studies have shown that music and music training provide a wealth of educational benefits to children. Early exposure to music has been proven to help develop areas of the brain responsible for language and reasoning skills. Music education also increases the spatial and temporal reasoning necessary for advanced mathematics. Children who study music typically score better on standardized testing as well.

Music education not only provides children with a terrific healthy outlet for self-expression, it enhances creativity and boosts self-esteem. There are a number of ways for parents to help their child receive quality education in music, starting as young as birth. The most important thing is to expose your child to a variety of music, including several different genres, not just classical or kid's music.

Sing songs to your infant each day. Fun, repetitive songs with movements or motions are best and as your child gets older, you can encourage her to join in. By the toddler years, your little one can dance along with music. Continue to sing simple silly songs with your toddler and dance together to a variety of songs, both upbeat and slow. Toys, like the Baby Einstein Learning Sounds Piano, will allow your toddler to create her own beats and songs.

Preschool age children can begin to differentiate between tones and pitches. Play games to pick which note is higher and which is lower. Introduce your preschooler to the specific sounds made by various instruments as well. Continue to listen to many different types of music with your preschooler and discuss how various pieces make you and our child feel.

Make musical instruments with your preschooler and play them together. Shakers are easy to make out of ordinary household items. Attach two paper plates together with a hole puncher and yarn or cover the ends of a toilet paper tube with construction paper and fill either with dry beans or rice. A coffee can and lid can be used as a drum. Have fun and use your imagination to create your own family band.

You may want to start formal music education with music lessons at this age. Discuss how various instruments are played and allow your child to choose the one he would like to learn. Visit a symphony or orchestra performance to investigate the various instruments. Piano lessons are typically best for this age because your child will learn to read and play music without having to remember difficult fingering techniques.

Continue your child's music education as she enters elementary school. As your child gets older, she may begin to prefer a certain genre of music, but keep exposing her to a variety of music. Allow her to start learning an instrument by this age and make practice a part of her daily routine. Provide your child with encouragement and support in her musical endeavors.

By the middle school and high school years, encourage your child to be a part of a band, symphony, or orchestra. Playing music as a group provides even more developmental benefits than playing alone and a teenager's involvement in a quality music program is important for self-development.

Music, even without the educational benefits research has proven, is a fun and relaxing pastime. Start at a very young age to instill the love of music in your child and continue throughout their childhood to provide an excellent musical education that will drive their future success.