



# ***Music and Mental Health: Building a Strong Foundation for Early Learners***

***MARCIA WOLF, MS**, SENIOR INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST, CHILD & FAMILY STUDY CENTER, UW-STOUT*

***JULIE BATES-MAVES, PHD, LPC**, CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING FACULTY, UW-STOUT*

# Defining Infant & Toddler MH

- ▶ Refers to a child's ability to:
  - ▶ Experience and regulate emotions
  - ▶ Establish secure relationships
  - ▶ Explore environments & learn
  
- ▶ *“It's not about mental illness as adults experience it, but instead about wiring an infant's brain for success.”* Lana Nenide, Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health

# What influences Infant/Toddler MH?

- ▶ Nature & stability of relationships with caregivers
  - ▶ *Degree of bonding, affection/attention, and responsiveness*
  - ▶ *Babies are “experience-dependent”*
  - ▶ *Babies also right-hemisphere dominant (limbic resonance)*

# Early learning is multi-faceted

- ▶ **Learning to cope with and manage emotions** is an important part of healthy development
- ▶ Threats/stress = increased heart rate, blood pressure, stress hormones

\*Small  $t$  truth

When supported during these times, there's a buffering effect (*positive & tolerable stress*)

- ▶ **Learning to read the environment and respond accordingly brings us back to baseline**
- ▶ Healthy stress response systems depend on this interaction

# So where does music fit in?

- ▶ Through FMRI, scientists have begun to map the brain's functions to specific region
- ▶ Language = left hemisphere
- ▶ Music = **both** right and left hemispheres\*
- ▶ Music engages areas of the brain which are involved with:
  1. paying attention
  2. making predictions
  3. memory and emotion
  4. visual, motor, and coordination

(Baker, 2015; Jun, 2017)

# Music activates the **entire** brain

- ▶ Listening to music first involves subcortical structures like **cochlear nuclei** (takes in the sound), **the brain stem** (controls the flow of messages between the brain and the rest of the body), and **the cerebellum** (motor skills)...
- ▶ It then moves up to **auditory cortices** (processes sound components) on both sides of the brain...
- ▶ And when you hear music, listening also involves the **memory centers** in the brain, such as the **hippocampus** (long-term, formation of new memories, emotional regulation) and lowest parts of the **frontal lobe** (emotional expression, problem solving, memory, language, judgment)...
- ▶ Tapping along with the music gets your **cerebellum** involved....
- ▶ Reading music involves the **visual cortex** (processing of visual stimuli), and listening to or recalling lyrics will involve **language centers** (comprehension & production) in the temporal and frontal lobes

# Auditory Imagery

- ▶ Music can also affect the brain's learning capacities, **increasing the size of the auditory and motor cortex**
- ▶ A research team from the Netherlands also found music is associated with an improved ability for **auditory imagery**

# So what is that?

Auditory imagery is a mental representation using your auditory sense

It is the power of your mind to create auditory "pictures".

**Essentially - it is hearing sounds in your mind.**

- ▶ Ex. Remember the last time you were caught in the rain. What did it sound like?
- ▶ How does your laugh sound?
- ▶ Imagine a dog barking and a cat "talking". What is the difference between these sounds?

▶ **How can this be useful for little ones?**

# Music is impactful

- ▶ Music and rhythm affects multiple areas of the brain simultaneously
  - ▶ Music can help build new neural connections in the brain through experience and exposure
- ▶ The ability of the brain to “rewire” itself after trauma or injury
  - ▶ We've seen that for people with severe trauma to their left hemispheres, that **music can actually recreate the capacity for language on the right, uninjured side of the brain**

# Tips for Promoting Mental Health in the Classroom

- ▶ Give children language for what they see in others and feel in themselves
- ▶ “Listen” to their behavior and reflect it back
  - ▶ Help them verbalize/act out both what they can't do **and** what they can
  - ▶ Wonder/be curious out loud what's happening for them (*mutual empathy*)
- ▶ Validate what they are experiencing and who they are
  - ▶ Talk about feelings (self-disclosures) & how to cope
  - ▶ Avoid orchestrating emotions
  - ▶ Consider that anger is a secondary emotion
- ▶ Practice impulse control & emotional regulation
  - ▶ Activities/games, songs
  - ▶ Practicing emotional expression outside of the emotional moment
  - ▶ Repairing ruptures in your relationship

# Work to incorporate 3 things:

- ▶ 1. Identifying Emotions
- ▶ 2. Teaching coping strategies
  - ▶ Draw on their natural instincts (pay attention)
- ▶ 3. Practicing!

# Remember

- ▶ The brain wires based on what it frequently does.
- ▶ Essentially, if we engage their brains in activities that promote emotional regulation, impulse control, social connection, and more.....we are increasing the changes that the lessons will stick.

\*Cells that fire together  
Wire Together\*  
meaning that patterns of  
neurons that are used repeatedly  
to perform any function become  
connected in a way that makes  
the function  
easier  
to repeat.

# Songs that teach acceptance and emotional literacy

## Dance and Movement Tips:

- ▶ Stick out three fingers making an "E" shape and pull it across our eyes during, "Eeeeeemotion."
- ▶ Teachers and parents should model facial expressions of feelings during the song and encourage children to copy their face or make their own for each emotion mentioned in the song.
- ▶ During the song, the children can also demonstrate their "mad walk" and "sad walk" and "happy walk" as another way of getting in touch with and expressing feelings.
- ▶ David Kisor:  
<http://www.songsforteaching.com/positivechoices/emotions.htm>

## ▶ Lyrics:

- ▶ Can you feel it? Yea!  
Can you feel it? Yea!
- ▶ E-mo-tion. Energy in motion.  
Everything I feel is meant to be. (Let it be)  
E-mo-tion. Energy in motion.  
Everything I feel is part of me.
- ▶ I can feel happy. I can feel sad.  
I can get scared. I can get mad.
- ▶ Can you feel it? Yea!  
Can you feel it? Yea!
- ▶ E-mo-tion. Energy in motion.  
Everything I feel is meant to be. (Let it be)  
E-mo-tion. Energy in motion.  
Everything I feel is part of me.

# Music and Young Children

- ❖ Music has the power and meaning that go beyond words.
- ❖ Singing a lullaby while rocking an infant stimulates early language development, promotes attachment, and supports an infant's growing spatial awareness as the child experiences her body moving in space.

# Social/Emotional

- ❖ Music by its very nature is a social experience
- ❖ Adults helping infants calm down helps support the development of self-regulation
- ❖ Experience of being soothed helps infants learn to sooth themselves
- ❖ Music evokes feelings
- ❖ Cooperate and build relationships
- ❖ Experience self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy
- ❖ Share and take turns
- ❖ Develop cultural awareness
  - ❖ Playing and using musical styles from children's home cultures create continuity between home and the caregiving setting.

# Physical

- ❖ Gross motor
- ❖ Fine motor
- ❖ Balance
- ❖ Body awareness
- ❖ Crossing the midline

▶ Pariakian, Rebecca and Claire Lerner; Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle Using Music with Infants and Toddlers; Young Children, March 2010

# Cognitive

- ❖ Many ways to participate in music experiences
  - ❖ Easily adaptable for developmental levels and abilities
  - ❖ Rhythm and repetition of songs
  - ❖ Counting, patterns, sequencing
  - ❖ Steady beat, memory
  - ❖ Observation of differences
  - ❖ Pretend play, symbolic thinking
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- ▶ Pariakian, Rebecca and Claire Lerner; Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle Using Music with Infants and Toddlers; Young Children, March 2010

# Language/Literacy



- ❖ Spoken language
- ❖ Dual language learners
- ❖ Receptive language
- ❖ Phonemic awareness
- ❖ Universal language

# When

- ❖ Transitions
- ❖ Daily greeting
- ❖ Circle time
- ❖ Music Time
- ❖ Large Motor
- ❖ Outdoors
- ❖ Special Events

# How

- ❖ Developmentally appropriate materials
- ❖ Routines/predictability
- ❖ Use familiar tunes
- ❖ Post words in room
- ❖ Music corner/area
- ❖ Music routine
- ❖ iPad
- ❖ Sign language
- ❖ Chant
- ❖ Rap
- ❖ Speak
- ❖ Be creative with your voice

# Greeting Songs

## **Here We Are Together**

(The more we get together)

Here we are together, together  
Oh, here we are together all sitting on  
the floor  
There's Nate and Bobby and Julie  
and Evelyn ....  
Oh, here we are together all sitting on  
the floor

Remember to include teachers

## **"Ben's" Here Today**

(Farmer in the dell)

Ben's here today, Ben's here today  
Hi-ho the derry-o, Ben's here today  
Mary's here today, Mary's here today  
Hi-ho the derry-o, Mary's here today  
We're all here today, we're all her  
today  
Hi-ho the derry-o, we're all here  
today

# Transition Songs

## **We Are Waiting**

(Frère Jacques)

We are waiting, we are waiting  
To wash our hands, to wash our hands  
Soon it will be Marlee's turn, then it will  
be Daisy's turn  
We are waiting, we are waiting  
  
To go walking  
To have a snack

## **Come And Find**

(Do you know this friend of mine)

Come and find a polka dot, a polka  
dot, a polka dot  
Come and find a polka dot and sit  
right down  
  
Come and find a chair at the table, a  
chair at the table, a chair at the table  
Come and find a chair at the table  
and sit right down

# Ending Thought

- ❖ Through sharing musical experiences with the people who care for them, young children feel cherished and important.
- ❖ “The cost of an egg shaker? \$4. The cost of a parachute? \$50. Using music activities to enrich the lives of young children? Priceless!”

- ▶ Pariakian, Rebecca and Claire Lerner; Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle Using Music with Infants and Toddlers; Young Children, March 2010

# References

- ▶ Baker, Mitzi. "Music moves brain to pay attention, Stanford study finds." Stanford Medicine. Accessed February 24, 2015
- ▶ Skoe, E. & Kraus, N. 2012. A Little Goes a Long Way: How the Adult Brain Is Shaped by Musical Training in Childhood, Journal of Neuroscience, 32, 34, 11510. DOI: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1949-12.2012
- ▶ Pariakian, Rebecca and Claire Lerner; Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle Using Music with Infants and Toddlers; Young Children, March 2010
- ▶ Marcia Wolf [wolfm@uwstout.edu](mailto:wolfm@uwstout.edu)
- ▶ Julie Bates-Maves [batesjul@uwstout.edu](mailto:batesjul@uwstout.edu)

# Websites

- ❖ Center for Inclusive Childcare [inclusivechildcare.org](http://inclusivechildcare.org)
- ❖ Zero to 3 [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org)
- ❖ WI Alliance for Infant Mental Health [wiaimh.org](http://wiaimh.org)

# Books

- ❖ Giraffes Can't Dance By Giles Andrea
- ❖ John M. Feierabend Books:
- ❖ The Book of Bounces
- ❖ The Book of Wiggles and Tickles
- ❖ The Book of Tapping and Clapping
- ❖ The Book of simple Songs and Circle
- ❖ The Book of Lullabies
  
- ❖ The Book of Kids Songs A Holler-Along Handbook Nancy and John Cassidy
- ❖ Ring A Ring O'Roses Finger Plays for Preschool Children Flint Public Library
- ❖ The Eentsy, Weentsy Spider Fingerplays and Action Rhymes Joanna Cole & Stephanie Calmenson

# CD's

## ❖ Putumayo Kids Presents:

- ❖ World Playground
- ❖ Sing Along with Putumayo
- ❖ Asian Dreamland

## ❖ Chinese Lullabies-Beijing Angelic Choir

- ❖ Dan Gibson's Solitudes-Exploring nature with music-Mozart forever by the sea
- ❖ The World Sings Goodnight-Tom Wasinger
- ❖ Piano Classics-St. Clair Entertainment Group, Inc.

## ❖ Ellipsis Arts:

- ❖ Celtic Lullaby
- ❖ Cuban Lullaby
- ❖ Latin Lullaby
- ❖ African Lullaby
- ❖ Mother Earth Lullaby
- ❖ Mama's Lullaby
- ❖ World Music for Little Ears

# Instruments

- ❖ [KaplanCo.com](http://KaplanCo.com)
- ❖ [WestMusic.com](http://WestMusic.com)
- ❖ [GrothMusic.com](http://GrothMusic.com)
- ❖ [Orchestore.com](http://Orchestore.com)
- ❖ [NorthSideMusicWI.co](http://NorthSideMusicWI.co)
- ❖ [LittleHandsMusic.com](http://LittleHandsMusic.com)
- ❖ [Peripole.com](http://Peripole.com)