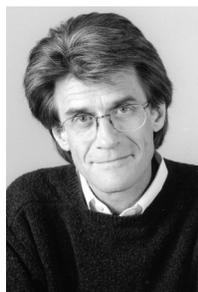


Intergenerational Music-Making Offers Many Shared Benefits for Children and Seniors

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We all know that music is good for us—no matter how young or old we are. Throughout our lives, music stimulates us socially, physically, cognitively, and emotionally and promotes language, concentration, social skills, confidence, and self-esteem. It's interesting to

note that the power of music is often most easily seen in the responses of both the very young and the very old. Who hasn't seen a baby bouncing or kicking reflexively when being sung to by a loved one or an elder suddenly become alert when they hear a favorite song from their youth?

In fact, research suggests just how profound and lifelong the benefits of music are. During our earliest years, active engagement with music promotes brain development and naturally supports growth in many areas essential to life and learning. Music activities during early childhood foster growth in many crucial areas, including language, motor, and social-emotional development. In our later years, participating in singing and movement activities helps keep the brain active and engaged, counteracting memory loss and depression. It also supports older adults physically, providing opportunities to improve coordination, sustain muscle tone, and provide essential oxygen to the whole body.

Beyond the benefits for the individual, music is one of the most powerful tools we have for creating bonds and connections across generations—whether you sing and dance with your own elderly relatives or join a Music Together Generations class. In these very special classes, children ages birth through five and their parents or caregivers meet weekly with “grandfriends” in an independent or assisted living residential facility, residential rehabilitation center or senior

day program. Regardless of age or ability, everyone is invited to participate in rich music activities that include singing, dancing, clapping, tapping, shaking shakers, and swinging scarves. We know that music “speaks” to all ages and taps into a kind of joy and fun in a unique way.

Intergenerational music making is a win-win on multiple levels. Music classes bring many seniors back to a time when music was an integral part of their lives. Sharing memories of meeting up with friends at the local dance hall or singing in a church choir delights the residents and brings joy to the parents as well. With so many of us living away from our families of origin, intergenerational music classes are a great opportunity for young children to bond with the elderly when they may not have grandparents or great-grandparents as part of their everyday lives.

When elders and young children make music together, there are shared benefits and here are just a few:

- Singing engages the whole brain. Studies show that an elder's active engagement with music provides a host of benefits for the older brain, increasing oxygen and blood flow, stimulating focused attention, activating memory, even temporarily mitigating the symptoms of dementia for older adults. Music also lights up the young child's brain, stimulating and strengthening important neural connections for music as well as for other areas of learning.
- Singing really does make us happy. Studies show that singing reduces stress and makes elders feel happier, decreasing risk for depression. Cortisol levels in babies are optimized when they are sung to lovingly, resulting in a sustained “quiet-alert” state, which supports learning.

- Music does a body good. For both young and old, singing engages the body, exercising the lungs, stimulating major and minor muscle groups (tap those toes!), and promoting coordination. For children, music-learning is multisensory: important musical knowledge happens through experiencing movement, both through their own bodies and through the model of others.
- Singing together equals meaningful connections. When people of all ages make music in a community with their voice and body, they have great fun together and often experience “belonging,” being part of something deeply important and purposeful.
- Singing creates memories, old and new. Music can spark the recall of past experiences for elders, even those with dementia. It helps the past truly come “alive,” giving them access to deep feelings activated by remembering an event or moment from the past. It can help them connect the dots back to the past. But making music in an intergenerational setting can also help elders create new memories, through pleasurable shared music experiences. For parents and children, making music with an extended “family” of multiple generations is often (at first) a novel experience. The new experiences inspire the creation of rich family memories that can last a lifetime.

Music Together is an internationally recognized, developmentally appropriate early childhood music and movement program for children birth through age seven. First offered to the public in 1987, the Music Together curriculum, coauthored by Guilmar-tin and Dr. Lili Levinowitz (Director of Research), is based on the recognition that all children are musical. All children can learn to sing in tune, move with accurate rhythm, and participate with confidence in the music of our culture, provided that their early environment supports such learning. Music Together offers programs for families, schools, at-risk populations, and children with special needs, in over 2,500 communities in 40 countries around the world. The company is passionately committed to bringing children and their caregivers closer through shared music-making and helping people discover the joy—and educational value—of early music experiences. More at www.musictogether.com and www.facebook.com/MusicTogether.