

Soaring IQ and Composition Scores Music Key to Raising Kids' IQ

by Sharon Burch

In past generations, singing and playing instruments was an integral part of family life, a great way to express and entertain yourself and others. We did not realize it, but we were also exercising our brain while we played, causing us to be creative, more vibrant, smarter, etc. In our current generation, we tend to be passive listeners and consumers as a society. As a result of this, we have shortened the mental development of our children and the opportunity to reach their mental potential.

Humans are "wired" for music. Until recently, scientists did not know how music affected the brain. The advancement in technology allows scientists to actually "see" brain activity via PET scans and MRI imaging scanning the blood flow in the brain. Our brains are "wired" with neural pathways. Most activities only cause a portion of the brain to "light up" with activity; thus, the saying, right brain/left brain, etc. But there are actually four

parts to the brain and music makes ALL of the areas light up and create new neural pathways as a person is learning and playing an instrument. Those neural pathways remain in tact and can be used for other things besides music.

Norman Doidge, in his book, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, shares case after case of people forcing

their brain to change and adapt either voluntarily with discipline, or involuntarily due to odd incidences. Studies confirm that our brain has plasticity. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is proven to be a case of "can't want to," rather than too old to change.

Daniel Levitin passionately explores the connection between *Music and the Brain* in his book of the same name. Google his name, watch video clips on YouTube, or go to his website. It's an exciting time of discovering how little we know and how

much there is to learn. There is definitely enough evidence to recognize it is not in a music teacher's imagination. Music has a huge impact on activity in the brain. You can physically/visually see the growth and changes that happen inside the brain. The possibilities are endless. The implications for music therapy and music education are profound. Just check out PBS video "The Music Instinct." Neurologist and author, Oliver Sacks relays a true story from his book, *Musophilia*, where a man was indirectly struck by lightning through a telephone and three weeks later composing and playing the piano for the first time. Sacks believes the man was "re-wired" through that experience. The list goes on and on.



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Even if you are still skeptical about music making kids smarter, let's look at the other benefits. Socially, music is an ageless hobby creating interaction with great people. Take a look at any school band or orchestra or top-ranking choir and you will find a huge percentage of the members are in the top 10 percent of their class and college bound. Striving for excellence is a given in a musical group. Everyone has to perfect their part for the group to perform at their best – NObody "sits on the bench." Everyone has to pull their weight or the whole group suffers. Creativity, especially in jazz groups is developed, honed and embraced. Who couldn't use more creativity in their work-

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Often Overlooked Safety Traps Put Children at Risk

by **Melissa Kay**

Each year in the U.S., more than 2,000 children under the age of 14 die as a result of a home injury, according to Safe Kids USA, a non-profit organization.

“Parents often underestimate their kids’ abilities and overestimate their intelligence,” says Chrissy Cianflone, Director of Program Operations at Safe Kids USA. “They think, my child’s too smart to do X and they often don’t realize how strong their kids are.”

There are so many things to think about as you safe-proof your home to protect small children that it’s easy to overlook important risks.

Most people are aware of common safety measures like covering your electrical outlets, keeping your child away from hot stoves and watching them like a hawk as they bathe, but there are other dangers that don’t readily come to mind.

1. Cords from window treatments – According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, one child a month between the ages of 7 months and 10 years dies from strangulation or is severely injured by near strangulation from the loose strings or cords on window blinds and shades. A window covering advertised as cord-less does not mean that it is truly cord-free.

2. Dressers and other tall furniture – Dressers are dangerous because they are heavy, not always well balanced and can be pulled over if a child tries to climb them. An unsteady toddler trying to climb doesn’t understand that a heavy object can topple. Invest in brackets found at home improvement stores or baby stores like Babies R Us to anchor dressers, TVs and wall units. Keep heavier items on lower shelves or in lower

drawers, and don’t keep remote controls or temptations like candy or toys on top of furniture. www.BabiesRUs.com

3. Window screens – Never rely on a window screen to keep children safe from an open window. Screens are for keeping insects out, not for keeping kids in. Invest in heavier child-proof window screens, which cost under \$30. Don’t place furniture by a window, potentially creating a climbing opportunity and the associated risk. <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml00/00126.html>

4. Open medication containers – Be vigilant about your child’s safety away from home. A risky situation can exist when a child visits a grandparents’ home where pills may be left within their reach. Vitamins and OTC medications can be extremely dangerous to children. Remind family members and caretakers to buy pill bottles with child safety caps and keep all medicines and pills out of your child’s reach, preferably locked up.

5. Under the Kitchen Sink – More than 100 children ages 14 and under die each year from unintentional poisoning, according to Safe Kids USA. In addition to household cleaning supplies, pesticides, cosmetics, art supplies, paint products and alcohol are dangerous to children. To avoid accidental poisoning, store these products up high in locked cabinets. It is a good idea to install a safety latch to keep the doors to under the kitchen sink secured at all times.

Melissa Kay works in the marketing department of Kenney Manufacturing, makers of the new Truly CordFree™ Roman Shades.

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force? Creativity is what makes the difference and gives any company the cutting edge.

There are many benefits of being involved in making music, but the neural pathways drives home the point and gets our attention. Scientists are reluctant to state that playing a musical instrument makes you smarter, but all the indicators are there, so let’s look at it from the opposite angle. Instead of trying to prove that music makes you smarter or is good for you and your child, try to prove that it is not. I can’t think of a single reason how learning a musical instrument is detrimen-

tal, can you?

Give your child every opportunity and advantage you can: Enroll them in music lessons and watch them grow and mentally develop as they play, create, express, and struggle through the rigors of the discipline mastering an instrument. You will discover a more creative, brighter and mature person in the making.

Nationally regarded music education teacher and advocate Sharon Burch is the author of Freddie the Frog® - a fantastical 4-book with companion CD series that helps young children learn musical concepts while they are duly immersed in Freddie’s colorfully illustrated adventures. She may be reached online at www.FreddieTheFrogBooks.com.



Trying to be a good role model

OK, you know you probably would be surprised if you found out that some of your friends – or even their younger brothers and sisters – look up to you. Think about people in your own life that you have looked up to. By being a good role model, you can show others that you are responsible.

Always try to be aware of your actions and realize that somebody is probably watching you most of the time. Whether you are working hard or goofing off, chances are somebody notices. Try to recognize what your bad habits and problems are, and

try to fix them.

It will be hard at first, but making the effort to change them will be good for you and for everyone who looks up to you.

Mikki



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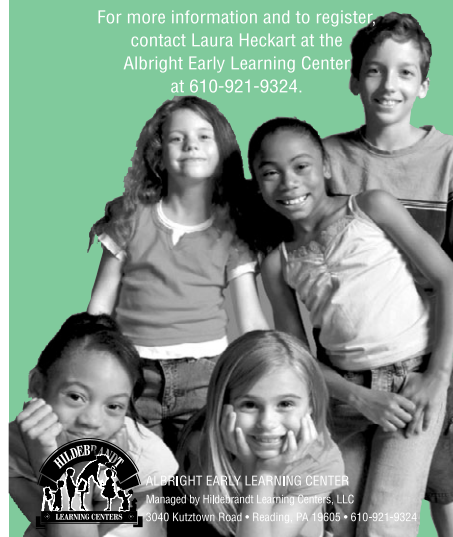
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