

Why the Arts Are Important in a Child's Life

Timing, as we all know, is everything with an endeavor like this and **Nursery Tap, Hip to Toe** is part of a growing trend in this country to create video DVDs that compel and propel children to get up off of the couch and get physical. However, **Nursery Tap, Hip to Toe** is not only physical, it has multilayered influences; the rhyming which helps with language skills, the rhythm and singing introduces musicality, the theatrical staging and “acting” out of the rhymes promotes creative expression, and of course the introduction to some of our major dance disciplines; ballet, tap, and hip hop.

These are certainly potent reasons to be introduced to and become involved in the arts. When our daughter was little I noticed she couldn't get enough of rhyming, word play, nursery rhymes and making up our own little rhyming songs. Ironically, this unlocked my own brain to write lyrics and rhymes, but what I really noticed was how much our daughter was entertained while her language skills thrived. I realized then that we must nurture this part of our children's brains. This was our primary motivation for creating **Nursery Tap, Hip to Toe**. Children have an almost non-stop desire to be creative. They live in a mental space that is constantly curious, expressive, physical, at play, and engaged. The importance of nurturing this creativity is well documented and has amazing benefits. A child who is exposed to and involved in the performing arts often develops a greater capacity for learning. Through the arts, children are encouraged to depend on themselves creatively, so they learn how to solve problems better, while developing the ability to rely on themselves to bring new ideas into the world. They learn to listen to their own compass...speak from their souls.

This is not to say that all children should become professional performers. That would be a whole other conversation. It simply means when they participate in the performing arts they become better equipped to look at the world from many different vantage points. The arts also innately provide a spiritual component. When a child engages in arts activities they are stripped of pretenses. They speak from their heart, their soul. They bring into existence their authentic self.

***Famed Broadway composer/lyricist Stephan Schwartz says**, “Exposure to the arts at a young age”, he says, has far-reaching benefits on society. “I think the arts are very important for children growing up...Exposure to the arts creates better members of society”, Schwartz says, because the arts themselves are about "increasing empathy, increasing in people the ability to see things from other people's points of view, and understand the world not just from your own narrow perspective but from the perspective of people in other cultures. And with their minds opened to many possibilities, children can grow up to become stronger and better leaders.”

*From “Increasing Empathy”, an interview with Stephen Schwartz by **Jena Tesse Fox**
www.BroadwayWorld.com

Then there are the academic benefits. The following is from;

Americans for the Arts

ww3.artsusa.org

Young people who participate in the arts for at least three hours on three days each week through at least one full year are:

- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem

Add to that the benefits to brain development and you have a recipe for children who grow up to give the world amazing gifts.

From the work of Dr. Bruce Perry 2002 adapted by Richard L. Gaskill Ed. D; the following are called Neuroenhancement Activities.

For Midbrain development; the following activities help develop the brain specifically through music, chanting, rhyming, poems, nursery rhymes, and rhythm.

***Narrative:** Dramatic story telling by adults; reading books and poems with rhyme and rhythm, especially Dr. Seuss and nursery rhymes.*

***Movement:** Activities such as songs, chants with dance or movement activities are very important.*

And finally, extracted from” How Art Can Advance the brain of an Underprivileged child”:

“Exposing children to art from the time they are born can nurture the intellectual process, especially if they face socio-economic or familial strains. Such art exposure can help their social advancement so that the discrepancy between their age and cognitive age decreases.

The presence of art can also serve as therapy for the population of children who are considered special needs; ADD, autistic, developmentally disabled.

Introducing the Performing Arts at Home

8 Tips to Nurture the Creative Child: Juleen Murray Shaw

The following may seem obvious but bears repeating...

- When reading rhymes, poetry, Dr. Seuss, A.A. Milne, etc. to your child, emphasize the rhythms
- Help them find words in their world that rhyme
- Use different vocal qualities in exaggerated ways. Use dialects...it doesn't have to be perfect. Kid's just love it when you act out and use different voices for different characters.
- Encourage play acting and dress up...it stimulates their imaginations
- Encourage making up songs and their own rhymes.
- Encourage repetition...kids love to find something they find funny and do it again and again and again. *Embrace this quality.*
- Take your time when reading and employ the old theatrical device called the “Pinter Pause” for dramatic effect
- Stop at a cliff hanger when reading narrative so they can't wait to hear the next installment.