



1. Tune Up Your Voice: You're Gonna Need it!

Hi, I'm Amy McConkey Robbins and in this first lesson, Chris Barton and I want to focus on the most important musical instrument you can own: YOUR VOICE.

Chris and I have spent many years discovering and trying ways of incorporating music into the LSL approach. It has involved research, but also trial and error and experience. But, even though some of our methods and thoughts have shifted slightly over the years, we still firmly believe that "The voice is the most important instrument you can own." It is your constant companion, doesn't cost anything and is the instrument most closely related to speech that there is. Plus, it provides a mechanism through which emotional intent is conveyed in a way that no other instrument can for very young children.

Humans throughout the millennia have relied on their voices to bond, soothe, and play with their infants. Lullabies were sung even before instruments existed. That special use of the sing-song voice, sometimes called motherese or parentese or infant directed speech, is the place where music and language converge. We use higher pitch and lengthen the duration of our vowels to seek attention and connect with our babies. "Ooooooh, such a pretty baby. Such a sweet baaaby." It's that "baby talk" which captures the infant's attention and primes the processing skills necessary to later decode speech. This period is time sensitive. Tonya Bergeson found that mothers of infants with cochlear implants used motherese when engaged with their child and these mothers adjusted their speech characteristics to the hearing age, not the chronological age of the child. This shows us that the use of motherese is responsive and sensitive to the child's needs.

Now, for those who say, "But I don't have a very good voice" I would say: **"But it's the most important and salient voice your child hears!"** So, use it to your advantage. We aren't trying to turn our children into opera stars, we are just using music as a mechanism to jumpstart the auditory system. So we need to sing often throughout the day. Another reason to sing is that it teaches your child that music, while similar to speech, is its own domain. When you sing or play music with a child, they respond by moving, Chris calls it the "baby bop." It's the natural response to hearing music. So, watch this clip of a child and be inspired to

Do Music. REAL Music. Every Day!