



2. BabyTunes: Singing with Infants and Toddlers

Hi, it's Amy McConkey Robbins with Lesson 2 in our AudiTunes program. In the first segment of this series, Chris Barton and I made a strong case based on current research and our own experiences, for integrating music into the lives of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. For a child to be successful in either music or language, input must be abundant and easily accessible. Hence, the statement, "your voice is the most important instrument you can own." Music and language are multisensory experiences, meaning they require kinesthetic, auditory, and visual domains to work together.

Professionals who practice a LSL approach agree that even babies and toddlers with hearing loss should be exposed to music experiences throughout the day, just as children with typical hearing are. So, here are some ideas focused on three sensory domains:

- To reinforce the **Kinesthetic Domain** (Kinesthetic refers to learning through feeling, through body position, and through muscle movement):

Have the child sit on your lap facing you while you sing and bounce him/her on your knees to the beat of the song. This reinforces that first motor response that music elicits. Experiment with fast and slow tempos. You might know the traditional children's rhyme: "This is the way the ladies ride, bookity, bookity, bookity booke. This is the way the gentlemen ride, bookity, bookity, bookity booke." Even babies begin to anticipate the rhythm changes in a routine like this, and love to participate!

You can also dance the child on your feet while you sing and waltz around the room. ("La lalala" to Danube Waltz)

Sit in a rocking chair and rock while you sing. (Toora loora loora)

Sing songs while pushing your child on a swing ("You're going up up up Weeeee) or pulling your child in a wagon ("The wagon wheels go round and round.")

- To reinforce the **Auditory plus Visual Domains** combined:

Have the child sit on your lap facing away from you while you sing and look at a book with pictures ("One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve Teddy Bears came, to the Teddy Bear picnic."). This provides the optimal listening position as your voice is in close proximity to their hearing device, but they can't see your mouth or gestures, thus they rely on audition. The visual supplement of a book offers joint attention, meaning you are both "on the same page" so to speak.

Or have the child sit on your lap facing away from you while you sing songs with hand gestures. *Itsy Bitsy Spider, Twinkle*

- And to reinforce the **Auditory Domain**

Seat the child on your lap facing away from you. Give him/her a shaker, maraca or other rhythm instrument. Have them play when they hear you sing and stop when you stop singing.

Think of the times in a day that you have your child's captive attention: meal time, bath time, bed time, even diaper changing time and add a little song to make those times language-rich. One way to do that is to take a familiar child's song and change the lyrics. It's called a piggyback song. I use the "Farmer in the Dell" tune a lot: "We're going to take a nap, we're going to take a nap, we are going up the stairs we're going to take a nap." You can see that we're simply narrating the child's life in song.

Or, insert your child's name into a familiar song to personalize it. You're going to see a wonderful example of a mom who's doing this with her little boy. Think of all the iterations of what musicologists call the "child's song" which is a minor third interval ah-ah (*Ring around the Rosie, Rain, Rain go Away, nan a nan a boo boo, you can't catch me*) that *Minor Third Interval*. Make that minor third interval your own and add words to it. Children do it all the time! If you are still a little reluctant to make up songs, we've included some of Chris's that you can use.

Until next time, remember:

Do Music. Real Music. Everyday!