

A Love Song For the Ages: Science Confirms Power of Music for Bonding With Babies

Kidz Central
Station

December 8,
2015

By Renee Bock

Sometimes science confirms what we know already on a gut level, a truth that we live by every day. I've been singing with young children for over a decade. Babies, three year olds, five year olds. They come to me as strangers and immediately connect through song. I don't yet know their names, but they relax, they trust me, they are present as a group.

This week, scientists at Oxford University revealed that singing bonds people together more quickly than anything else. Over seven months, researchers studied the adult relationships forged in singing groups vs. creative writing or craft making experiences. They found that music makes people feel closer to each other faster and has tremendous power as an "ice breaker" between strangers.

Scientists have long debated the evolutionary value of music to humans. What contribution does singing make to our survival as a species? It doesn't help with reproduction or self-defense. Is it nothing more than "auditory cheesecake" as cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker asserts?

Here we begin to carve out an answer, one that reminds us as parents, teachers, and caregivers, that singing is an incredible tool for bonding with children from birth, creating deep attachments and expressing love even before spoken language emerges.

Yes, classes in creative writing and craft making brought people together. Adult students shared stories, learned about each other lives, and relationships evolved as familiarity blossomed. Not so with music. When people sang together, they didn't need time or stories, they just felt connected. Imagine what this means for tribes in early human history, large groups newly interacting, needing to forge immediate ties to find food, build shelter or fight enemies. They'd skip a lot of steps if singing inspired immediate affinity. Congruence, alignment, agreement, harmony, synchronization—the building of social networks. We don't need to speak the same language to be a force, a community that moves and acts. Perhaps this is why religion is so often accompanied by song, and why we make music as we go into battle. Certainly this is why throughout human history we continued to sing and enjoy singing today.

As someone who sings with babies, this study feels like old but welcome news. We've known for a long time that



singing generates good feeling, aligns our heart rhythms and produces endorphins. Singing changes our brains and makes us happy. Now we know that singing provides immediate glue between strangers. Babies, who can't yet talk, share stories of their lives, communicate feelings in words, can bond immediately through music. It's part of being human. Way more than "auditory cheesecake," a dessert or afterthought of human evolution. Singing is elemental.

For those parents or caregivers who feel they can't sing or who simply get embarrassed, the Oxford study reminds us to put those feelings aside and jump right into singing with children to deepen our relationship right away. Your special face, your special smell, and now your special song, will let them know that you are their special someone. The impact will be immediate, a love song for the ages.

Renee Bock is the chief academic officer at Explore+Discover, a social learning center in Manhattan. She has a master's in early childhood education and more than a decade of experience in the field.

Resources:

- 1) <http://rsos.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/2/10/150221>
- 2) <http://mic.com/articles/127865/new-study-finds-singing-brings-people-together-better-than-anything-else>
- 3) <http://ideas.time.com/2013/08/16/singing-changes-your-brain/>
- 4) <https://theconversation.com/how-music-helps-resolve-our-deepest-inner-conflicts-38531>
- 5) <http://mic.com/articles/124457/science-shows-how-singers-brains-are-different-from-everyone-else-s>
- 6) <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00334/abstract>
- 7) <http://mic.com/articles/110628/13-scientific-studies-prove-music-lessons-were-the-best-thing-your-parents-did-for-you>



Author: [Kidz Central Station](#)

Founded by a NYC mom of two young children, Kidz Central Station uses technology to solve the problem so many busy parents face—how to find, book, and manage their children's classes, camps, local family events, and birthday parties. Kidz Central Station offers more than 3,000 classes, camps, and birthday party options representing hundreds of NYC's top activity providers. With a sophisticated search engine and class reviews, it is easy for parents to find the best classes for their children, sign up for a trial class, and directly enroll.

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Google+](#)