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Carmel Mountain Preschool Blog

Interview with Norm – The Rhythm Child Drum Circle

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Interview with Norm



How did you get started in drumming with Children?

I've been a professional musician for thirty years. Drumming and percussion were my main instruments. When I had my first child back in 2000 I was trying to relate to him with something I knew. As a first time parent I didn't know how I was going to relate and communicate to him. He was colicky for the first six months so I started playing music for him. As he got older I was trying to find music that fit our likes and our family and I couldn't find much that had the rhythm, vibe, and style that I connected with. So I started writing my own music by just singing to drum beats. That became a CD which became our first performances as Rhythm Child. My son's preschool asked me to come in to his school and drum with the kids. Other schools heard about it and asked me to perform for them as well and then it turned into a career.

How did the drumming help with your son's colic?

The sounds, vibration, and movement were the only things that helped calm him down from crying. We could point to that as being the only thing that allowed our son to calm down and get him to a better space.



Did you see other benefits of exposing your son to music at an early age?

As he got older I began noticing that he could pick out different sounds and patterns in music. I saw him identifying the layers in music better than other children his age because he was exposed to it and because we talked about music. When our oldest son got into music in later years he was able to pick up instruments faster than others. He became a sought after bassoon player which is one of the hardest instruments to play. These are all things that I noticed after the fact. During that time I was approaching it as a parent and musician, not as an educator.



What is so beneficial about drumming and music for infants and children?

Music helps infants/children understand layers, parts, how things come together. I teach children drum beats in parts and then they take the parts and put them together to build something bigger. For math, it helps children take the parts and connect them into equations. In reading and writing, it helps children take individual sounds and put them together to make words and sentences. In social skills, drumming teaches children to work together, as well as, respect each other's space and where they are at. In science, you can study how sound travels and how instruments are made to make sound. Some of these lessons and connections I am able to explain to children and others the children learn naturally and organically. Children have an easier time learning language if they are exposed to music because they can differentiate sounds. There are health benefits from drumming like circulation and the increased oxygen to the brain. I have studied and read all of the reasons that music can benefit children's learning, but that's not why I do it. I do it because I think every child should have music in their life and I think the drum is the most accessible instrument – kids know how to use a drum when you put one in front of them. If I can plant a seed of confidence ... that is good enough for me.



What are easy things that parents can do to bring music into their children's lives?

Find music that they love, as parents, that they can share with their children. If you love classical musical share that music and talk about it. I think the exposure to lots of different kinds of music is important so it's not a style thing but also culture. You can talk about different cultures, styles, beats and why you like that music.

I learned to play the drums by putting on a record and playing. It doesn't take a lot of effort putting on music and interacting with your children by dancing, tapping on the table, or making an instrument out of anything – a stick hitting a rock. Love and curiosity of music is so important. There are so many ways out there that we can expose a child to music. They will eventually find a way to play the music they love. The simple stuff is a great foundation and then children will find what they love, the teachers they need, or instruments they like.

What is something special that you didn't expect from doing drum circles at schools?

When I'm in the classroom I notice that the teachers appreciate it, too, because they get a release. You see the teachers relax and boogie down a bit. The teachers also get to see the children in their classroom in a

different social setting and they get to see them let go in a whole different element – they get to see a different side of them that they don't get to see on a regular basis. A very shy boy or girl could be letting loose on the drum and a very aggressive child could be super mellow.



How do kids with sensory sensitivities react to drum circles?

I get to interact with special needs children and at first I tried to be more reserved and sensitive and then I decided to do the drum circle the way I'm used to doing it. I found children with noise sensitivities didn't seem to be so sensitive to the drum beats. Some children are fascinated and want to put their hands on my drum to feel the vibration while I play it. One child with high functioning autism told me, "The drum is the instrument of the mind – it takes you where you want to go." The drum can take you out of normalcy and allow children to experience something different.

Any final thoughts?

Music really is about exposure, not keeping it one dimensional. A wide variety of sounds, textures, languages, instruments, and food is so beneficial for children. Music can really touch on all of these things. If a parent really loves a certain type of music that passion can be passed on – and then the child

can form their opinions later. Putting love and passion into something makes it so much sweeter. Children can sense a parent's love and passion for something and it makes them more excited and passionate about it.

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