



Selecting particular music

You may decide to choose a particular song or piece of music to play to the child because you think it might encourage a helpful conversation. Perhaps the song words are relevant to their situation or the mood of the music seems to reflect the young person's feelings at the time.

Having a variety of music available to you allows music to be selected spontaneously to match or heighten the child's mood, or alternatively to create a contrasting mood. For example, you might want to play some soothing music to a child after a distressing situation or conversation such as on the way home in the car after an upsetting contact visit.

Certain styles selected by the worker may feel culturally or socially alienating to some children preventing them hearing through this to the underlying musical mood. So, for example, you might love Western Classical Music or Reggae but the child may find it off-putting. It's best not to rely on stereotyped notions of what might be acceptable to the child, though, as this runs the risk of stunting experimentation and patronising or pigeon-holing the child.

Children's previous experiences of a type of music or a particular song can also influence the child's response to the music and lead to a very different effect than the one you were intending. For example, the music might arouse a painful or frightened response in the child if there are associations to traumatic or abusive experiences, e.g. when the music was last heard.

Things to remember

- It's important to remember that children's responses to the music you select are not always possible to predict.
- Their taste may be influenced by a number of extra-musical influences, such as:
 - previous experiences of the music
 - their mood
 - the styles of music they are familiar with and prefer
 - social class

- education
- ethnic origin.
- Beware of “relying on stereotyped notions of what might be acceptable to the child” as this “runs the risk of stunting experimentation and patronising or pigeon-holing the child” (Lefevre, 2004, p. 340).
- Aim to be led by the child’s reactions to what you play and modify selections accordingly

Exercise

Think of

- a) a nursery rhyme
- b) a pop song

which you might choose to play to a particular child or young person.

Reflect on why you have chosen each one and what kind of useful effect or discussion it might promote.

Further Reading

Lefevre, M (2004) 'Playing with Sound: The Therapeutic Use of Music in Direct Work with Children', in *Child and Family Social Work*. Vol. 9, pp. 333-345