

A Mothers Voice

Creating a rich, nourishing experience of sound during pregnancy can be deeply affirming for you and your baby, lets take a deeper look at the benefits.

Sound as Creation

In many myths and theories, sound marks the beginning of creation – the Big Bang, the voice of God saying let there be light, the Hindu Ohm. The sound MA means mother in many languages and is usually one of the first sounds in a baby's vocabulary. As a mother your voice is an immense creative force with the power to teach, praise, encourage and inspire your child. As you explore your voice, you connect with your own natural intelligence which knows instinctively what resonates (sounds right) for you and your baby.

The Incredible Multiple Roles of the Ear

The French Doctor Alfred Tomatis wrote

'Thanks to the ear, man moves, reaches verticality, communicates, listens and thinks'

Our Ears supply our brain with a massive 90% of stimuli for processing.

- ❖ 60% is signals from the skin, muscles and joints through the vestibular part of the ear which regulates our sense of balance, space, gravity and movement. It consists of the semi-circular canals – which indicate rotational movement and the otoliths – which inform linear movement.
- ❖ 40% is sound processed in the cochlea– a snail shaped bony structure filled with a watery liquid which vibrates in response to sound vibration. Thousands of tiny hair cells are then triggered into a motion which sends electrical signals via the nerves to the brain.

So as your baby begins to experience sound, it is receiving powerful sensory material enabling it to develop not just language but significant motor skills.

Your Baby's Relationship to Sound & Your Voice

- ❖ The ears of an unborn baby develop between the 13th and 16th week and babies have been shown to move in response to sounds as early as 16 weeks.
- ❖ Sounds of 500hz can be perceived by the 19th Week.
- ❖ The inner ear is the only organ to reach adult size at 24 weeks.
- ❖ At 5-6 months the baby's heartbeat is shown to change rate in response to sounds.
- ❖ The sound level in the womb has been measured as being 75 decibels – the level of hearing sounds from within a car with the windows open.
- ❖ Your voice as a mother generates most impact. It communicates to your baby's spine through its vibration in your larynx and spine.
- ❖ Newborns display an accelerated heartbeat in response to their mother's voice and also a preference for sound which is played through a sound filter, mimicking the conditions of the womb.

- ❖ Fire Alarms which use the sound of their mother's voice to alert sleeping children reduce their waking time from 3 minutes to 20 seconds.

Breathing Deep

The baby hears the sound and rhythm of your breath as well as your voice. Yoga Guru, Yogi Bhanan states that during development in the womb, the baby takes its breathing patterns from the mother. The simple practice of sitting quietly and breathing deeply can bring both of you lasting benefits, preparing for labour and that special moment when the baby emerges and takes its first breath.

Singing

Singing lullabies is an ancient, instinctive practice which is deeply soothing and reassuring for your baby. Singing causes your whole body to vibrate, deepening your breathing, gently exercising the tummy muscles, releasing happy hormones (endorphins) and massaging the internal organs.

As well as songs, you can use a process called Toning – singing simple vowel sounds like OOO, AHH, EEE – to open your voice and connect with your baby. Matching songs with simple gestures can enhance a newborn baby's sensory awareness, encouraging them to communicate through movement as well as sound.

Story Telling

Your baby is learning to understand language in the womb- one study showed that babies who were read the Cat in the Hat for 3 and half hours during pregnancy then responded by sucking much more rapidly during feeding when read the same text. Reading to your baby before and after birth is a wonderful bonding experience and boosts their communication skills.

BabyTalk

'Language is a process of free creation' - Nomm Chomsky

Babies begin to experiment with sounds by burbling babytalk. The two-way mirroring between a mother and baby is fundamental in helping babies feel comfortable with expressing themselves, so having playful gobbledygook conversations supports the development of their voice. Not only this but your baby will be freely exploring the primal sounds that form the foundation of language and no doubt creating some of their own.

Laughing

Laughter is life's nectar, sweet, rejuvenating and medicinal. It opens our hearts to each other and helps us take life lightly. It's great to share jokes and funny stories with your baby, to belly laugh and let those warm sound ripples spread through your being, encompassing the joyful being within you. The Navajo Tribe hold a special ceremony called A'wee Chi'doodloh/'The Baby Laughed' to celebrate a baby's first chuckle as indication of its decision to join the community (having been between worlds during the first weeks of its

early life.) The baby is also believed to be influenced by the attributes of the person who witnesses this first lovely gurgle.

Dancing with Sound

Sensory integration begins in the womb as the foetal brain senses the movements of the mother's body. – Jean Ayres

The movements of your muscles and joints communicate to your baby. Dancing and singing to your favourite tunes whilst pregnant, as well as being great fun, communicates love, freedom and a healthy enjoyment of sensuality to your baby.

Baby Showers

Baby Showers are a great way to celebrate the coming of your child and to gather with your community. Singing and dancing form a wonderful part of this, with everyone present blessing the baby and the mother with loving words. In India a special baby shower ritual called Valaikappu is widely practised in the seventh or ninth of pregnancy. Its name simply means Bangle Ceremony as many bangles are blessed and given to the mother. The sound of the bangles are designed to reach the baby and celebrate its hearing.

Baby Mantras

In many spiritual traditions, mantras are special phrases which are chanted to bring about a state of meditative calm. In Judaism the mother at childbirth uses Psalm 20 and 18 to call out during her labour – ‘Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free.’

We can create our own modern day mantras - simply singing ‘You are welcome, you are safe’ to your unborn baby can act as a reassuring sound-cuddle for your baby. Chanting your own empowering birth mantra can assist during labour and liberate your own creative energy during that miraculous process.

These are just a few ways in which you can enjoy and explore your voice with your baby. I encourage you to allow your natural creativity to flow, liberating both you and your baby and enhancing the deep love between you.

©Katie Rose March 2010

Katie Rose – holistic therapist and musician offering groups and individual sessions for mums and mums-to-be in London - for more information please visit www.therosewindow.org