

Hearing Impairments Activities

The two main goals for the people with hearing impairments are to preserve any residual hearing and to learn to communicate with people in the hearing world. To preserve the residual hearing, one of the easiest activities is to feel the vibrations of a piano. They can put their feet against the back soundboard of the piano or they can use their hands or even place their ears and the side of their face on the back soundboard of the piano. It is easiest to feel the low tones. Music is especially helpful as an assessment tool for people with hearing impairments because of its wide range of frequency. We can check to see what frequencies they can hear and if they have a high-frequency (pitch) or low-frequency (pitch) hearing loss.

Other helpful activities using the vibration of sound to use with students:

- Having person feel the vibrations of an omni-chord as it is played on own lap at a loud volume.
- Having person play wind instruments which produce vibrations that can be felt within the head chamber.
- Striking a triangle against the bone behind the ear carries vibrations directly into the bone and allows person to feel the vibration.
- Placing hands against a tuba while it is being played provides stimulation.

While the textbooks will tell you to present instruments through the speaker of a microphone if you are wearing a microphone-telephone system, do experiment with presenting the instruments to the students within close proximity to their ears. We have found that they are able to respond to the vibrations of more expensive high quality cymbals and even finger cymbals when these instruments are held just an inch or two away from their ears after being struck. Also experiment with using a microphone to amplify an instrument such as an omni-chord and then using a second amplification system. You will need to watch out for feedback when you double amplify.

How to teach rhythm

- Because the students cannot hear groupings of notes that involve long and short presentations of notes, they need a way to feel the difference between a long note and a short note. You may simply have them bounce their hands or arms to the rhythm in the air to designate the length of a note (one bounce per quarter note).
- The ideal way to teach rhythm is to have them imitate you stepping out the rhythm on the floor using high steps. They can see your feet move and match their feet to the rhythm you present. This activity is ideal because they can feel the rhythm throughout their entire bodies as they perform it from the bottoms of their feet.
- Another way for them to learn about rhythm is to watch you move your hand to depict rhythm on a flat surface such as a tabletop or desktop.

- To illustrate the concept that we hear because we feel, remove your ring or use a penny. Drop the ring or penny on a drumhead and let the students watch it bounce. This demonstrates the tactile component that results in the auditory process we call hearing.

Communication with the hearing world

Sign language may be taught through songs. Orchestrating sign language to song lyrics is a great way to develop communication skills in sign language. Dance may be combined with interpretive sign to depict song lyrics. Incorporation of large flowing scarves when dancing may help increase the perception of rhythm and awareness of the flow of your music for people who cannot hear it. Use Evelyn Glennie as a resource to inspire people who lack hearing to pursue musical involvement. Here is a helpful website:

<http://www.evelyn.co.uk/>

Claus Bang

Claus Bang has done incredible work with people with severe hearing losses.

Three major contributions to the field of therapeutic uses of music:

1. Bang built a pipe organ into a suspended wooden floor to enable people with hearing loss to physically feel the vibrations of sound.
2. Bang taught people who were profoundly deaf to match pitches of opera singers and even to approximate diction.
3. Bang used large Orff Tone bars to teach people with hearing loss to match pitches by imitating the feeling of the tone bar being struck against the chest.

Suspended Wooden Floors

Suspended wooden floors carry vibrations when the speakers are placed face down against the surface of the floor. Students who have a hearing loss can feel the vibrations from the sound. Placing a bass drum on the wooden floor also emits strong vibrations which can be felt by people with hearing loss.

Guitar

Placing the side of a guitar against the throat and neck of a person with hearing loss while strumming the guitar allows the person to feel the vibrations directly. You may also sing loudly on "ah" sounds with your throat touching the opposite side of the guitar while simultaneously strumming a harmonically consonant pitch. To enable the person with a hearing loss to better perceive vibrations and to become aware of the effects of sound, encourage the person to reciprocate by trying to make sounds against the guitar vocally.

Sound Perception/Auditory and Tactile Components

To illustrate the concept of sound production which stems from a tactile stimulus but is manifested in an auditory stimulus, drop a penny onto a large drumhead. The penny will bounce. The drum will produce an auditory sound because it was struck.