

The Seven Concepts of the Suzuki Philosophy

by Danette Schuh

The Suzuki philosophy is often misinterpreted, or abbreviated to the extent that the full meaning of Suzuki's ideas cannot be understood. The following seven concepts, 1. Every child can learn, 2. Ability develops early, 3. Environment nurtures growth, 4. Children learn from one another, 5. Success breeds success, 6. Parental involvement is critical, 7. Encouragement is essential; completely define the Suzuki philosophy, which Suzuki developed for the purpose of educating the whole child.

The belief that **every child can learn** means that every child has the potential to develop ability. There are no "geniuses", only children who have been taught and trained in the appropriate environment to develop superior ability. This contradicts the traditional opinion that only children who exhibit some sign of innate ability or "talent" without prior instruction are deserving of lessons in music or any other discipline.

Research has proven that neural development in the brain is highly active in the first years of life, and slows dramatically thereafter. **Ability develops early** in children, and the very first years are the most important in a child's educational development. The parents should begin creating a rich environment for the child before birth, so as not to lose one precious moment of early development.

Environment nurtures growth. We are products of our environment. We react to our surroundings, whether they have a positive or negative effect. A rich, positive, stimulating environment will encourage growth and development of a child. If the positive qualities include comfort, calm, warmth and love, the child will be nurtured and their ability development will be superior in breadth and depth.

Watching children together, one can see that **children learn from one another**. They are highly observant and will see the actions of others and mimic them. It is very important that older children are paired with younger ones, so that more advanced behavior and abilities are modeled. Also, positive, desirable behavior and ability must be modeled; otherwise, bad behavior will be reinforced.

Just as failure creates fear, which paralyzes a child, causing another failure, which creates more fear which continues the endless downward spiral, conversely, **success breeds success**. A success will create satisfaction in the child's own ability, which gives the child confidence from their past experience. With that confidence, they are comfortable and more motivated to try again, or to try a new experience. As each new experience is successful, the motivation to continue increases, thereby increasing the confidence, creating an endless spiral upward. This is the development of self-esteem.

No learning or development of ability is possible without the most important persons in a child's life, the parents. **Parental involvement is critical** for child development. Parents are the child's first and most important teacher. They teach their children the skills of life, from the most basic physical survival skills to the loftiest spiritual and moral ideals. When the child lives with both parents, they are both essential to the child's total health, well-being, security, and development. As the child matures, there will be other people influencing their life, but the parents will have the strongest, closest, longest-lasting bond. Outside influences cannot have enough power to override the influences of the parents.

Encouragement is essential. Children require motivation to perform any action. Motivation for eating is physical hunger, and motivation for sleep is fatigue. No one has to create a motivation for a child to eat or to sleep, it will happen naturally. The motivation to become a well-mannered, moral, productive member of society must be created. Encouragement, exemplified by a smile, a hug, or a few kind words, will give the child a wonderful feeling and create a desire to continue the activity or the learning, so they can experience that feeling again.

These seven concepts, when combined sensitively and knowledgeably in raising a child, will create the ideal environment where any child can develop into an excellent human being of superior ability with a beautiful heart.