

Are Parents Training Children to be Inattentive?

When I was still in high school, a local private grade school invited me to become one of their piano teachers. Needless to say, I was nervous, but quite excited about the opportunity.

I soon found out that while some of my students loved piano and entered wholeheartedly into practicing, others absolutely did not. In retrospect, this shouldn't have been much of a surprise; but what was really surprising was the way in which many parents responded to it.

Instead of insisting that their child continue with the task that they had started for a set period of time (often a year or so), many parents would come to me with a sigh and say, "Well, we've tried it for a little bit, and now he wants to try basketball. I don't want to force him to do something he doesn't like, so we're going to move on."

I thought of these experiences when I ran across some information on the effects of music lessons on the childhood brain. As reported in [Mic](#):

"The study found increased thickness in parts of the brain responsible for [executive functioning](#), which includes working memory, attentional control and organizational skills. In short, music actually helped kids become more well-rounded. Not only that, they believe that musical training could serve as a powerful treatment of cognitive disorders like ADHD."

As I pondered this information, I realized that the parents of some of my students had given their children a one-two punch against attention and focus by pulling them out of music lessons so quickly. The first blow to attention came in not receiving the musical training that strengthens the brain in

these areas; the second came in not requiring children to stick it out and learn discipline in a difficult task.

Now before people jump on me and argue that not every person is cut out to be a musician, let me say that I get that. (And as a former teacher, I can point to many examples of children who absolutely were not cut out to be musicians!)

But even if a child is not cut out to be a musician, does that mean parents should allow them to give up on a task so easily?

It seems to me that many parents today have grown used to catering to their children's whims, letting them drift from sport to musical instrument, to another kind of activity.

But in the process of trying to make them happy by letting them bounce around to whatever suits their fancy, are today's parents simply training their children to be less attentive?

And is this decision really about their children's happiness? Or is just easier to give them what they want?

Image Credit: Ed Yourdon bit.ly/1iowB8m