

# PRIMITIVE REFLEXES

Primitive reflexes are automatic stereotypic movements directed from the brainstem and require no cortical involvement ie thought processing. They are needed for survival and develop in the womb and in the early months of life. However, as higher more sophisticated centres of the brain begin to mature, these primitive reflexes become a nuisance and must be abated in order for proper neurological organization of the brain to develop.



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## WHAT HAPPENS IF PRIMITIVE REFLEXES DON'T GO AWAY?

- If the Primitive Reflexes are retained past the first year of life (at the very latest) they can interfere with social, academic, and motor learning. Basically, the perception of our inner and outer environment and our response to it may be disturbed; that is, conscious life may be disturbed. Children with learning disorders, ADHD, Autism Spectrum, and various other neurodevelopmental disorders are known to have retained primitive reflexes contributing to their symptoms and level of dysfunction.
- Each reflex is associated with one or more of the Sensory Processing Systems: Auditory, Taste, Tactile, Smell, Visual, Vestibular, Proprioceptive and/or Interoceptive. Therefore, if retained, a child/person may experience dysfunction within one or several of the sensory processing systems. This can lead to what is known as Sensory Processing Disorder.
- If they are not inhibited at the appropriate time they are said to be retained. The Primitive Reflexes should be inhibited by 12- 18 months of age.

If this does not happen, the person may have these or other symptoms:

- Impaired function of the Central Nervous System
- Poor gross motor skills (jumping, skipping, etc)
- Poor fine motor skills (hand- eye coordination ,manual dexterity)
- Poor perceptual ability
- Poor social skills

## OVERCOMING LEARNING DIFFICULTIES & DISABILITIES

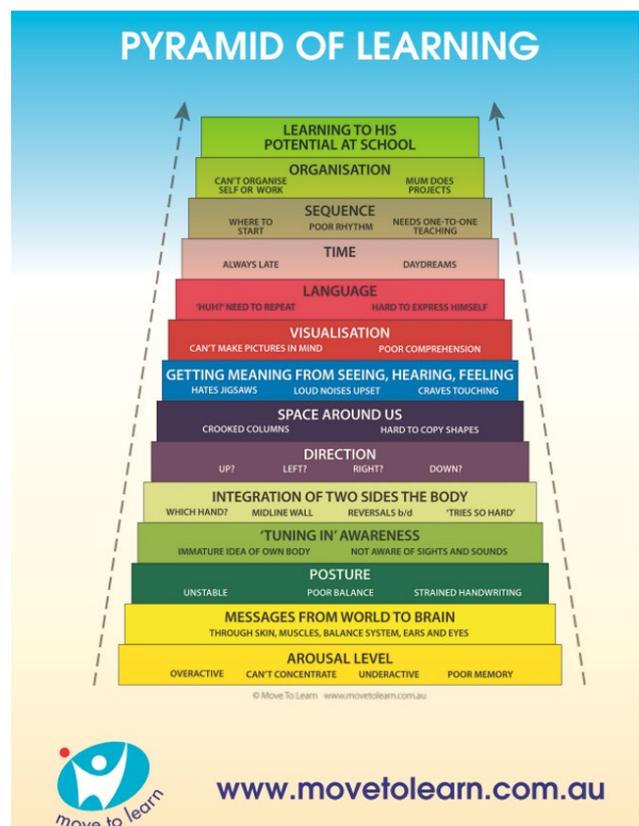
It is estimated that 15% to 20% of students in every classroom are not achieving as well as they could. Some have been assessed as having Learning Difficulties (LD), Learning Disabilities, ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia while others have not been assessed but everyone knows they “should be doing better”, even if they are getting good passing grades.

Part of the complexity of the problem is that a child can be struggling for a number of reasons. Some have undiagnosed problems with their eyes or ears, some are trying to focus when their little bodies are already well and truly overloaded with allergic irritation and most have underlying neurological immaturities that are slowing down their ability to receive and process information.

## LOOKING AT THE WHOLE CHILD - TREATMENT ORDER

In order to treat, we must look at the whole child. The pyramid of learning from the book Help Your Class to Learn shows the order of the stages for neurological development. Each is foundational for the following stage and must be in place for learning to be accomplished successfully and enjoyably.

We also need the right professional at the right time. If a child is poor at concentration we start at the bottom, the medical stage, and consult with a doctor and/or an occupational therapist before we do anything else. It should be remembered to focus on the causes not the symptoms of Learning Difficulties.



[www.move-to-learn.com.au](http://www.move-to-learn.com.au)



## THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT

Much preparation needs to occur before a child is ready for effective academic learning, and most of it occurs through the natural movements and play common to all children. First we learn to roll, then to creep on our tummies, then to rock on hands and knees, then to crawl - and all the time we are learning and preparing ourselves to learn. We are progressing through important developmental stages. Our muscles build strength and co-ordination, our eyes learn to focus and we become integrated and ready to take on more complex tasks such as learning to read and write.

- But what if, for some reason, one or several of these developmental stages are missed?
- What if a child doesn't spend enough time rolling or doesn't crawl?
- What if a child reaches school age and they do not have all the building blocks of learning readiness in place?

These skills build on each other, and if a foundational skill is not acquired, the resulting 'gap' can compromise the entire learning structure. The child may struggle with expected age appropriate physical skills and the conduction of messages in the brain and the nervous system will usually be inefficient and slow, making academic learning more difficult. Many struggle to keep up with their peers and most do not achieve to the level of their natural capacity.

The good news is that these developmental stages can be addressed at any age. If a child is having difficulty at school, sometimes simply guiding them through these developmental milestones again (or perhaps for the first time) can help them fill in the missing gaps and become ready to learn academically.

## THE MOVE TO LEARN MOVEMENT PROGRAM

The Move to Learn movement program is the extensive work of Barbara Pheloung, an Educator passionate to support the learning needs of all children. Move to Learn is a simple,

flexible movement program designed to help children acquire the skills they need in the natural way and order that they were originally intended to be acquired – through movement.

It addresses the underlying functional deficits that children with various learning difficulties & disabilities have shown, integrating left and right brain functions and helping to mature the vestibular system as well as any retained primitive reflexes that should normally have disappeared by the time a child is attending school.

The program requires little in terms of training, space or equipment and takes only 15 minutes a day, five days a week. It can be done with an individual, a small group or with a whole class, and statistically significant results have been seen to occur within 2 to 3 months. Comprising of a warm up and 9 simple movement sequences it covers all the essentials that every child needs to establish an effective foundation for academic learning, and in the right order.

Move Learn Grow incorporates the movements of the Move to Learn movement program at the end of each session to further support children's development. It is both our vision and Barbara's, to positively support as many children as possible.

Please visit this link for more information:

<https://www.movetolearn.com.au/>

Ten Gems for the Brain – The Move to Learn Movement Sequences (5th Edition 2018) By Barbara Pheloung.

To purchase the '10 Gems for the Brain' ebook please email: [jini@movetolearn.com.au](mailto:jini@movetolearn.com.au)) to arrange your copy. A DVD of the movements is also available.

AUD \$20.00

Payment can be made via PayPal or by direct deposit

Learn Sense Grow highly recommends that you purchase the 'Ten Gems for the Brain – the Move to Learn Movement sequences' e-book. If you have any further concerns regarding your child or student please contact your Occupational Therapist for further support.

