



Dyspraxia and OT

“Only children believe they are capable of everything.” – Paulo Coelho

What is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, also called Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), is a condition that can make it harder to coordinate and plan movements. Children with dyspraxia might have a bit of trouble with things like writing or playing sports.

What could Dyspraxia look like for your child?

It can look a little different for every child, but it’s important to understand that it has nothing to do with intelligence. Below are some common areas where it might impact your child:

- **Gross Motor Skills:** Activities like running, jumping, or playing sports may require extra effort due to challenges with balance and coordination.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Tasks involving small hand movements, such as writing, buttoning clothes, or cutting with scissors, can be considerably more difficult and may require more practice.
- **Spatial Awareness:** Understanding the space around them and judging distances can sometimes be tricky, leading to occasional bumps or falls. They might be described as clumsy or accident prone.
- **Speech and Language:** Speaking clearly, organising thoughts, or following verbal instructions can be harder. They might use the incorrect words or make different speech sounds.
- **Organisation and Planning:** Sequencing and planning tasks can be a challenge due to the struggle with their coordination.
- **Social Confidence:** Physical coordination challenges can sometimes affect self-esteem, leaving the child feeling unwilling to join in with team activities.

CHILDREN WITH DYSPRAXIA HAVE HAD TO LEARN PATIENCE AND TENACITY FROM AN EARLY AGE, THIS FREQUENTLY RESULTS IN CALM AND EMPATHETIC PEOPLE, WHO BECOME GREAT PROBLEM SOLVERS AND BIG PICTURE THINKERS.

Strategies to support children with Dyspraxia

- **Break Things Down:** Keep activities simple by breaking them into smaller steps and giving clear, easy-to-follow instructions.
- **Use Visual Helpers:** Charts, diagrams, or visual routines can make tasks feel more achievable.
- **Encourage Fun Activities:** Games like swimming, dancing, or martial arts can build coordination while having fun!
- **Work with an Occupational Therapist:** Occupational therapists can create tailored exercises and recommend tools that can help develop both fine and gross motor skills. They will work closely with you and your child to understand their own specific struggles and will help them recognise their improvements and their wins.
- **Allow Extra Time:** Offering a bit more time for tasks gives children the space to succeed at their own pace. Rushing children with dyspraxia can exacerbate symptoms and achieve the opposite of the desired response.
- **Try Adaptive Tools:** Items like easy-grip pencils, scissors, or Velcro-fastened clothing can make a big difference. Your occupational therapist will be able to recommend the best places to find these.
- **Celebrate Every Win:** No matter how small, every success deserves a big cheer, it can boost confidence and keep them motivated.
- **Build Social Connections:** Encourage friendships and focus on activities where they can feel confident and included.

Pam Leo said *“Children are mirrors, they reflect back to us all we say and do.”* This is important to remember, especially when considering how to help your child with Dyspraxia. A calm and gentle approach will help them understand how to manage any frustrations they may feel along their journey.

