

ADHD - Being Hung up on Reflexes

What Are Retained Reflexes? | Reflexes are automatic movements babies are born with to help them survive and grow. As kids develop, these early reflexes should fade away to make room for more mature skills. When reflexes don't fade (or "integrate"), they can get in the way of things like focus, movement, and emotions.

Why Does This Matter for Kids with ADHD? | When reflexes stay active, it can make ADHD characteristics worse!

- Have trouble sitting still or focusing
- Get overwhelmed by loud noises or busy spaces
- React emotionally or have frequent meltdowns
- Struggle with coordination, posture, or handwriting

These aren't behavior problems. They are signs the body still needs support to finish early development steps.

How Can Movement Help? | Simple, playful exercises can help the body "catch up" and calm the nervous system. These movements help kids feel more in control of their bodies, emotions, and attention.

Animal Walks

Why: Builds body coordination, uses asymmetrical body movements and strengthens core muscles

How: Pretend to be a bear, crab, or frog. Move across the room using arms and legs.

Balloon Tap

Why: Helps with visual tracking and attention

How: Tap a balloon in the air and try to keep it from touching the ground. Try keeping one hand in a pocket forcing the hand to cross midline.

Superman

Why: Builds core strength and encourages coordination across the body

How: Lie on your stomach with arms stretched forward. Lift arms, chest, and legs off the floor and hold for 3-5 seconds. Rest and repeat a few times.

Line Jump Trail

Why: Improves coordination, timing, and reflex integration

How: Create a trail on the floor using tape or chalk. Use short lines to show where to place one foot or two feet. Make some patterns like a mountain shape (toes together) and a "V" shape (heels together). Have your child jump along the trail, following the foot positions. This supports balance, midline crossing, and sequencing.

Remember: Small, consistent movement routines can make a big difference over time. Keep it fun and light!

Want More Tips? Visit www.wowadhd.com for videos, resources, and support.

This handout is brought to you by WOW ADHD: Practical tools for supporting sensory, emotional, and executive function growth.