

The Intersection of Developmental Reflexes and Alexander Technique

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MNRI: Masgutova Method of Neuro-Sensory-Motor Reflex Integration.

Developmental Reflex:

A motor response that automatically occurs each time a particular stimulus (or combination of stimuli) is presented. This type of reflex (there are many!) is the foundation for growth and development, and moving through milestones. Physical/motor, emotional and cognitive development are linked.

Note: Many infants, children and adults without some sort of “diagnosis” may be assessed, per the MNRI tools, and found to have some developmental reflexes not integrated. There is no way of knowing where/how/why this may be. Childhood? Injury? Stress? Trauma? None of us is fully integrated all the time! If there seem to be roadblocks within the context of learning/embodying Alexander principles, addressing these movement patterns can strengthen their foundation, especially if they come to Alexander Technique to sort out specific concerns.

[What is a Reflex | reflex definition, motor response, stimulus, stimuli, Masgutova](#)

Developmental Milestone:

A behavioral or physical checkpoint/skill set in early childhood development. It is important for teachers to be aware of basic milestones so that observations of certain behaviors are understood appropriately, with care taken to separate behavior from personhood; there is a sense of what may be expected when. When a behavior is observed to be far off from what might be expected, it is helpful to be curious about what is going on, so to determine if more assistance/intervention for a child is needed.

[CDC's Developmental Milestones Milestone Checklists](#)

Definitions/language associated with children whose behavior, development and daily function may “fall outside the norm”:

- Neurodiverse
- Exceptional
- Neurodeficit
- Developmental delay, disability
- Autism Spectrum

While “exceptional” is a common term in the US (and in other countries?), there is some discussion that this may do the child and family a disservice. I.e. a “diagnosis” is required for a child that needs/can benefit from special education, or an independent education plan (IEP). There are many definitions to be found online associated with the above list, and there may be other terms.

Additional notes, perhaps for future discussion? I would love to chat!

Lev Vygotsky and human development:

When researching Vygotsky and developmental reflexes in the context of MNRI, I encountered a lot of information about his theory of sociocultural development. With only a cursory understanding, it sounds as if some elements of this theory speak directly to AT principles and how AT is taught in schools. For example:

“Vygotsky’s theory is centered on the idea that social interaction is critical to cognitive development. With the exception of some large classes, students actively engage with their teacher and with each other.” [Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding](#). And:

“Vygotsky's sociocultural theory views human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society.

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)”

[Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory](#)

Additional information about Vygotsky:

https://masgutovamethod.com/uploads/media/uploads/source/Lev_Vygotsky_Russian_Psychologist_1896-1934.pdf

[Biography of Psychologist Lev Vygotsky](#)

MNRI Tactile Integration

The seed for MNRI was planted with Dr. Masgutova’s tactile intervention for helping children with burns on 60-80% of their body recover. There are a multitude of skin receptors that communicate information between ourselves and the environment, and the importance of our skin for surviving and thriving is well established. My personal and clinical experiences with MNRI’s method of tactile integration has been powerful, and has me thinking about the tactile influences in AT, the science of which is still on the horizon. Is there something that MNRI tactile integration can contribute to our understanding of our AT hands-on?

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