BLOOMING ABILITIES
Pediatric Occupational Therapy

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS **– 2-3 YEAR OLDS**

1. **In and out** – try cutting a hole in a plastic lid of a large empty container so your child can push small toys into the container, maybe shake it to make some noise, take off the lid and dump them out. You can also take a small box and take turns putting a toy in, out, over, under, behind or on. Talking about it develops language skills and this expands cause & effect, while working on fine motor skills.

2. **Push and pull** – explore different items you feel comfortable with your child pushing or pulling, this could include a laundry basket, a large box, or toys. You can fill them with objects to make them heavier. This helps with balance and strength.

3. **Open and close –** it can be fun to put things in and out of containers with lids. You can talk about and explore the concept of open & closed. This can be with snack containers and you can encourage your child to ask, sign or gesture if they want help. Placing your hand over theirs to help them open or close containers can help build the skills and independence when they are calm and ready to try!

4. **Drawing & colouring** – draw with chalk, or painting with water, colouring (scribbling) with crayons are fun to explore. You can draw a vertical line (up & down) and have your child trace or imitate you… horizontal lines or circles. It's ok if they are scribbles, but encourage the copying or imitation of similar forms. This develops pre-printing skills that are needed to develop writing and printing skills.

5. **Catching & Throwing** – with a balloon, beachball that's not fully inflated, beanbags or scarves are all easier for catching & throwing. This helps with building eye-hand coordination and big muscles.

6. **Body parts** – talk about parts of the body while dressing or washing. You can have fun doing this by pointing to a body part, naming it, or asking your child to find the ones you name. They can find the body parts on themself, on others, or on a doll or figurine. Try singing "Head and Shoulders" together. This helps build body awareness.

7. **Row, Row, Row Your Boat** – is a great way to get movement, rhythm and connection. If you are able to get on the floor with your child, push your feet together and hold hands, then slowly rock and roll back & forth, while singing "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream." Once your child becomes familiar you can pause in the middle, or just before the last line and wait for them to move or make a sound to keep the game going! This can be very calming and also encourages co-regulation of your child and you!

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8. **Move Like an Animal** – Try singing "Old McDonald", making the animal sounds and moving like the animals (waddle like a duck, crawl like a dog/cat/cow, gallop like a horse, hop like a bunny). This helps connect movements, language and sounds!

9. **Jumping, climbing, and crawling –** All these movements can be done inside (under/over couch cushions, tunnels, or chairs), outside in your yard or at the playground, jump from the bottom step, jump into a hula hoop, climb in and out of a laundry basket, crawl under a chair. This helps with gross motor skills and awareness and their body in the world around them!

10. **Beading** – You can explore simple beading by placing beads (or food like Cheerios or Fruit Loops) on a chopstick or pipe cleaner – a more solid surface is easier to begin placing beads on than a floppy piece of string. When this becomes easier you can change the beads, or what the child beads onto. You can count, label colours, or begin early patterns.

11. **Bike, Trike or Other Ride on Toys** – pedalling or pushing with their feet develops strength and coordination. Also, you child will need to pay attention to the world around them to safely navigate without crashing into things. This helps develop strength, coordination and awareness.

12. **Pretend Play –** Provide opportunities for your child to "pretend" to do the things they see others do – cooking, sweeping, feeding a doll, dressing a stuffy or brushing the teeth of a doll or stuffy. This can help practice what real life activities in a fun/game-like way – and all these activities require motor skills to complete, so playing can build the skills for daily life!

13. **Independence –** Encourage your child to do the parts of tasks they are able to help with – dressing & undressing, doing household tasks (like opening the fridge, putting their plate on the table or in the sink, sort laundry, match socks, put t-shirts in drawer, place books on a shelf, help carry and/or unpack groceries), turn lights on & off, open & close doors, or sorting toys/clothes/household materials by size, shape, colour, or texture - like spoons, hats, food, blocks, cars, Lego or other toys.

Many toddlers love to move really fast, but sometimes slowing down an activity as you do it together can encourage better skill development.

Take a deep breathe, and have some fun harnessing your inner child as you explore, discover and grow along with your toddler!

Questions? Reach out info@bloomingabilities.com

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