

DYSPRAXIA & AUTISM

Minimal speaking Autistic individuals often experience whole body motor difficulties referred to as Dyspraxia affecting the brain and body connection.

Who are minimal speaking individuals?

- children or adults who use few spoken words that can be limited, inconsistent, or difficult to understand.
- does not mean minimal understanding or intelligence.
- often highly intelligent, highly capable communicators when given access to AAC and reliable communication partners.

What is Dyspraxia?

- a mind body disconnect affecting how the brain plans, sequences, and executes movements.
- impacts speech, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and motor planning.
- rarely exists in isolation and is underdiagnosed and often missed
- a motor planning difference NOT a cognitive deficit.

What can Dyspraxia look like?

- difficulty saying words, but imitating someone else's words comes easier
- inconsistent ability to access words
- trouble planning and sequencing actions
- difficulty stopping or starting movements
- difficulty controlling motor movements
- difficulties with gross motor movements and fine motor movements

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Can they co-occur?

- research suggests that many Autistic individuals who are minimally speaking also experience motor planning difficulties.
- when both Autism and Dyspraxia are present, a person might have added difficulty with speech, motor skills, or complex sequences
- Autistic nervous systems may process information differently, influencing how the brain plans movement.

How can we help?

- presume competence and acknowledge that this individual may have an unreliable body.
- honour autonomy, offer choice, and respect boundaries and preferences even if not clearly expressed.
- focus on low pressure, high support motor planning support.
- provide visual models and access to multimodal communication (pictures, videos, AAC, typing).
- repeat models often and focus on small and simplified targets.
- be patient, apraxic bodies need additional time and may need more support using AAC.
- provide age-appropriate play, input, and education.
- support their movement and regulation to increase vocalizations, engagement, and language growth.

DYSPRAXIA EXERCISES

10 Family Friendly Dyspraxia Exercises

These activities strengthen both fine- and gross-motor skills through play. They don't require special equipment – just your time and encouragement. Try one or two each day.

Short, consistent practice helps more than long sessions that cause frustration.

If your child resists, start with the activity they already enjoy. The goal isn't to “finish” a routine – it's to have fun moving together.

1. Balloon Volleyball: improves hand-eye coordination.
2. Animal walks: builds strength, rhythm, and balance.
3. Sorting small items (coins, beads, buttons): builds finger strength.
4. Obstacle courses: improves coordination, balance, and confidence.
5. Finger painting or clay play: develops grip control and writing endurance.
6. Balance on one leg: builds posture, focus, and core stability
7. Cooking together: stirring, pouring, kneading, and cutting builds bilateral coordination (both hands working together).
8. Simon Says with movements: improves sequencing, focus, and listening skills.
9. Typing and Keyboard Games: helps with finger control and rhythm.
10. Yoga or stretching: build awareness and relaxation.