

Rhythmic Movements Work as the Brain is Wired to Respond - Development Can Continue

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These are the experiences of some of the families I have worked with who have been willing to do a home Rhythmic Movement Program. I frequently hear families say that these movements have made a big difference to their children's behaviour. One Mum said 'It's like night and day in our home now!'

- **10 Month baby not crawling on hands & knees**
Mum does passive rhythmic movements with her baby daily, and within a fortnight, he is up and crawling everywhere! His older brother didn't crawl, and crawling is important for brain maturation.
- **3-Year-Old with big outbursts, refusal to comply with simple requests & sit well for mat times**
Parents start daily passive rhythmic movements with their son, and within six weeks report: 'He's been really good at home. The occasional little defiance but definitely improved behaviour.'
Preschool teachers say he is no longer disrupting mat times or screaming, and is much calmer.
- **4-Year-Old with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) struggles to separate from Mum, big emotional outbursts at home, unclear speech, and poor eye contact**
Mum and carer introduce passive rhythmic movements at bedtimes. At first the girl is not so receptive so Mum makes a reward system, and finds doing them in the dark make it easier for her daughter. Later the girl can tell that the movements are relaxing for her. She begins to be able to move rhythmically herself for some of the movements. This is an indication of brain maturation. A good family friend visits six months later and spontaneously comments that her emotional regulation is so much better. She also speaks with clarity, and makes much more eye contact.
- **5-Year-Old with ASD, Anxiety and ADHD wanders aimlessly around at Kindy, sits slumped and unengaged at Circle Times, struggles to connect with peers, and is very clumsy**
Mum starts passive rhythmic movements with him each night. Mum reports that at first, he was quite fidgety when doing the movements so she let him hold something with his hands; later his body was able to be still. When Mum was away, Grandma did the movements for him. After about three to four months, he starts to play with a couple of other boys, stumbles less, sits upright for longer, and starts to talk in Circle Times. His Kindy teacher is thrilled with the improvements.
- **6-Year-Old with anxiety and shyness struggles to transition into the classroom each day**
His parents were initially uncertain that these movements could help. But after further explanation, they came on board early in the school year, and the father gave the movements to his son each night. It became a special part of their routine. By term two, the boy was able to enter his classroom calmly, participate in class discussions, and his parents noticed a maturity in his behaviour at home. He now got himself ready for school, and spontaneously helped with chores at home. There was less silliness, and he became calmer in his interactions with his younger brother. His Mum continues to use the movements with him from time to time e.g. before a big event or after illness.
- **7-Year-Old has difficulty with reading, handwriting is a lot of effort, focussing, needs to move a lot**
This boy was discharged from OT in Prep but in Term 3 of Year 1, difficulties were evident. He was behind in reading, and handwriting was a huge effort (it made his brain 'tired'). He struggled to follow instructions in class and at home. I found a large number of infant reflexes still active in his body. Mum couldn't do the movements for him at home. He had OT with me where over 12 months, I gave him the movements twice a week along with other activities to integrate his infant reflexes. He soon learnt how to do the movements actively for himself at night. We set up a reward chart with stickers and prizes after every month of completing his movement program each night. I showed a staff member at his school how to do the *Ten Gems for the Brain* Movement program with him. By the end of Term 1 of Year 2, he had gone up four reading levels. When I observed him again in class, he didn't stand out from the other students. He completed his writing tasks as expected.