

Body awareness is important because not only does it help us develop our fine and gross motor skills, but it helps us do simple tasks without thinking about how our bodies are going to move. Think about the last time you decided to sit on a chair. How much did you have to think about that movement? Chances are, you probably didn't think at all. Your body just did the task.

“Information about body position travels through the spinal cord and into parts of the brain that are not conscious. Because of this, you are seldom aware of where your body parts are unless you actively think about them. As you read this book, your attention is focused on the concepts and information presented. You may be filtering out the sound of your children playing in the other room. Perhaps you're eating a snack. Whatever you are doing, you are probably not thinking about your body position. Yet you are not falling off your chair or the couch because sensory receptors are taking care of that for you’

This concept can be difficult for children, because they are still learning about their bodies and how they fit in space. They overly rely on their vision to go throughout their day. Unlike you when you sit down, they have to think about different tasks. As they grow and practice, completing tasks over and over again, gaining a sense of their bodies, they gain a sense of body awareness. This is why children seem to always be on the go, they are obtaining a body awareness by figuring out how they are moving. When children don't gain this bodily awareness as they should, they lack development of their proprioception system.

Children with poor proprioceptive awareness often have:

- A poor posture when sitting and standing;
- Difficulty learning to swing;
- Difficulty grading movements leading to clumsiness;
- Difficulty applying the correct pressure and so appear rough or heavy handed;
- Frequent falls and regularly bump into things;
- Difficulty writing at speed and apply too much/little pressure through the pencil;
- A heavy reliance on vision to complete fine motor tasks.

“Heavy Work” Activities Heavy work activities are important as the pressure through the joints and muscles that they provide give the sensory feedback the child needs to improve their proprioceptive awareness. Doing some of the following types of activities regularly throughout the day, and particularly just before an activity that the child finds difficult, may help calm and focus them

- . • Rough and tumble play;
 - Monkey bars, trapeze, climbing frames, adventure playgrounds;
 - Trampolining
 - Pushing and pulling games such as Row Your Boat in either sitting, kneeling or standing and Tug Of War;
 - Catching and throwing heavy sandbags, beanbags and balls;
 - Sit the child on a piece of strong fabric on a slippery floor such as tiles, lino or polished wood. With the child holding one end of a piece of rope and you the other, pull them around the floor.
 - Everyday activities e.g. vacuuming, pushing the supermarket trolley, digging and raking in the garden, shaking out duvets, cleaning windows etc.
 - Wheelbarrow walks;
 - Vibrating pens and toys;
 - Jumping off something high to land on something soft e.g. from the sofa onto a pile of cushions
 - Squashy Ball: encourage the child to hold a sponge ball between two flat hands in front of the chest (prayer position). Squash the ball hard to try and keep it flattened for 10 seconds and then repeat.
 - Squash into The Floor: encourage the child to place the palms of their hands on the top of their head and press down for 10 seconds. Build up to 25 seconds over time.
 - Hotdog: roll the child up in a duvet (the child is the 'sausage' and the duvet is the 'bread!'). Put 'toppings' on the 'sausage' by applying firm pressure with your hands down their back, arms and legs. If your child really enjoys this try varying the type of pressure with the topping e.g. tomato sauce could be firm squeezing, onions could be firm patting. Always stop and ask the child if they want more. This way they get to control the input you are giving to suit their needs.
 - Strong Man Press Ups: child lies on their tummy on the floor and pushes up through his outstretched arms. Try doing press-ups against the wall or down on a desk. Considerations for Heavy Work Activities
 - For children with poor proprioceptive awareness opportunity to engage in these heavy work activities should be given before focus tasks and not as a reward
- . • Some of the more controlled activities can also be used at bedtime to help calm the child as part of a regular bedtime routine.

- If the child struggles with knowing which body part they are moving or needs a prompt to know what to move, give clues during activities by touching or gently tapping the body part.