



Monday

Healthy Body, Happy Me 2022

Movement Monday



Movement Monday

We all know that physical activity helps children and adults to maintain a healthy body, but did you know that movement and physical activity is just as beneficial for the brain as it is for the body?

Studies involving neuro-imaging have found that increased physical activity promotes the formation of grey matter in the brain which helps us to regulate our emotions, control our muscle movements and store memories. Physical activity increases oxygen and blood circulation throughout the whole body, especially the brain which directly supports cognitive development, including memory, perception, language, attention, emotion and decision making skills.

Read More

<https://bit.ly/3o6D2JP>

Ref: Abdelkarim, O, Ammar A, Chtourou H, et al. Relationship between motor and cognitive learning abilities. Alexandria Journal of Medicine, 2017.

It is important that children are provided with lots of opportunities to move and be physically active so they can develop their brain structure, learn more and have fun. Tummy time, rolling, crawling, running, skipping and jumping, along with a variety of other movement activities, help to build the brain during the first years of a child's life. The NHS has produced useful guidelines on the importance of physical activity for children (under five years).

Read More

<https://bit.ly/3G4XYHu>

As well as increasing oxygen and blood circulation required for cognitive development, engaging in movement and physical activity also releases positive chemicals in the brain, such as endorphins and serotonin. Raising the levels of these hormones boosts mood, leading to an increased sense of happiness and well-being. Children's self-esteem and self-confidence will naturally increase as they actively move, play and have fun. An increase in these hormones can also help to improve children's appetites and sleep cycles, contributing to a healthy body and a happy mind.

Movement and physical activities that require children to cross the midline of their bodies are significant for cognitive development. Imagine a line right down the centre of the body from head to toe - this is the midline. Crossing the midline involves moving arms or legs across the middle of the body to the opposite side, or reaching from top to bottom or front to back. When children do this, they are actively using both sides of their brain to coordinate and control the movement.

Activities which encourage children to cross the midline create strong brain connections from one side of the brain to the other and pathways for later learning, such as tying shoe laces, reading and writing.



Activity 1 Whose name is it?

Parachute play involves moving a large circular piece of fabric in different ways, sometimes to music or rhymes or to play games. Parachute play is fun and extremely inclusive. Children of all ages and abilities are able to participate from lying, sitting or crawling underneath to bouncing things on top and playing more complex team games. Depending on the size of the parachute, lots of children can engage in the activity at once.

Whose name is it?

Activity outline

- Ask the children to stand around the edge of the parachute, holding it up to waist height
- Explain that you are going to sing a song to the tune of 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat.' (Practise the song with the children first so they are familiar with it)
- Explain that when the song says 'down, down, down,' everyone must crouch down to the ground, laying the parachute flat on the floor. When the song says 'up, up, up,' everyone must lift the parachute up as high as they can above their heads and hold it there until a child's name is called. When a child's name is called they have to run under the parachute to the other side and as they do, the parachute should be slowly lowered by the other children
- Continue to play the game until all children that would like to try have had a turn.

Parachute song

Down, down, down we go (crouch down to the ground, slowly laying the parachute flat on the floor)

Up, up, up it's fun (lift the parachute up quickly as high as you can above your head and hold it there)

If your name is _____ (shout out a child's name)

Now's your turn to run. (Encourage the child to run from their position to the other side of the parachute whilst the other children slowly lower the parachute. The runner aims to get to the other side before the parachute reaches the floor. Remind children to be extremely careful when coming to the other side of the parachute – they should look for a space so as not to bump into anyone).



Resources

- Parachute (this can be a purchased play parachute, a homemade one using recycled bed linen or perhaps a donated one from a local regiment)
- Large space.

Learning opportunities include:

- Communication skills e.g. listening to and responding to instructions and communicating instructions
- Gross and fine motor physical skills e.g. muscle strength, grip, hand-eye coordination, balance and agility
- Sensory exploration with different colours, music and movements
- Cooperation skills through playing team games
- Social skills, such as turn-taking.

Activity 1 Continued...



Ideas for other ages

Lie non-mobile babies safely and comfortably on their backs using soft mats, rugs or blankets. Raise and lower the parachute gently above them, providing a sensory experience as they watch the changing shapes and colours above them and feel the breeze on their bodies.

Extend this into a game of peek-a-boo. As you raise the parachute up and down over babies, sing (to the tune of 'Frere Jacques'):

'Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo

I see you, I see you.

I see your tiny nose, I see your little toes,

I see you, I see you.'

Sit babies on your knee and hold a loop of the parachute. Toddlers can sit around the edge and grasp the edges of the parachute. Sing a variety of songs that involve going up and down or forwards and backwards e.g. 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' and 'Incy Wincy Spider'.

Add sponge balls or soft toys to the parachute as props for different rhymes. For example, 'Five Little Ducks' – add five soft ducks to the parachute and each time one swims away, bounce a duck off the parachute.

Fill the top of the parachute with bubbles. Slowly raise the parachute and gently waft it so the bubbles fly higher and higher. A bubble machine is good for this as if the parachute is shaken too vigorously, they will pop quickly and you will need more bubbles. Encourage the children to stretch up and jump to pop the bubbles as you sing...

'One little, two little, three little bubbles

Four little, five little, six little bubbles

Seven little, eight little, nine little bubbles

Ten little bubbles POP POP POP!

Pop, pop, pop the bubbles,

Pop, pop, pop the bubbles,

Pop, pop, pop the bubbles,

Pop until you stop.'



Use a parachute or large piece of fabric to create interactive story times using books, such as 'I Went Walking' by Sue Williams and 'Commotion in the Ocean' by Giles Andreae. Create props to match the creatures in the story which children can add onto the parachute as they arrive. The children can walk around in a circle to 'I Went Walking' and shake and make waves with the parachute for 'Commotion in the Ocean.'

Extension ideas

To increase the complexity and to further develop children's listening, attention and motor skills, you could change the movement each time. For example, 'now's your turn to crawl', or 'now's your turn to jump.'

Allow the children the opportunity to choose the name of the person to run.

Choose two children at the same time to run with the intention of them negotiating under the parachute to get to the other person's space. Again, remind children to be extremely careful not to bump into each other.

Activity 2 Create and conquer obstacle course

An obstacle course is a fantastic way to engage young children in a variety of movements. Obstacle courses use objects and structures as obstacles for children to conquer, as well as a specific path or route which children must follow in a set order. They can also be used for things such as timed challenges and races. Different types of obstacle courses can be created depending on the children's skill levels. The use of open-ended recycled resources can be re-used in different ways to provide new and exciting challenges.



Resources

You can source any objects you wish to create an obstacle course with. See the activity outline for our ideas.

Create and conquer obstacle course

Activity outline

- Mark out the start and end of the obstacle course and ensure that there is adequate space for the obstacles in-between
- Create and set up each obstacle

Cardboard crawl: With one large empty box, open up each end of the box to make a tunnel and if needed, secure and strengthen the box sides with additional tape. The aim is for children to crawl through the tunnel.

Walk the plank: Place two tyres amply spaced apart and lay a plank of wood securely on top to create a balancing beam. The aim is for children to walk across, keeping their balance as if walking the plank of a pirate ship.

Best of five: Place an empty storage container on the ground and using a stick, mark out where children should stand. Create five items to throw into the container, such as recycled paper scrunched up into five balls or five pairs of socks rolled into balls. The aim is for children to throw the items into the container getting as many as they can, out of five, into the container.

In and out: Fill eight recycled plastic bottles with sand or water and line these up an equal distance apart. The aim is for children to weave in and out of the bottles, being careful not to knock any of them over.

Tightrope walk: Place a piece of wool or string on the ground in a straight line. The aim is for children to walk on this with one foot in front of the other balancing as if on a tightrope.

Hook a number: Cut the middles out of five paper plates to make hoops. Fill five recycled plastic bottles with sand or water and number these one to five. Line up or group the bottles at just a slight distance apart. Using a stick, mark out where children should stand. The aim is for children to throw the hoops and try to get these over the bottles. If a hoop goes over then they get the score that is on that bottle. Record each child's score.

- Explain and demonstrate each obstacle to the children
- Allow children to work through and complete each obstacle at their own pace, moving from start to finish
- The more children repeat each obstacle, the more skilled they will become and eventually they will conquer the whole obstacle course.



Overcoming obstacles



Activity 2 Continued...

Learning opportunities include:

- Gross motor skill as children engage in crawling, walking, running, jumping, throwing and lifting
- Persistence and coordination as children gain more control over their physical skills through practising the obstacles (agility)
- Creating, planning and problem solving skills as children design and create a variety of obstacles
- Mathematical skills e.g. understanding and practising positional words as they go through the courses: under, over, behind, in front of, through, down and up
- Following and giving instructions by explaining and negotiating obstacles.

Extension ideas

Once children are confident with the obstacles, put them into pairs or teams to carry out a race and see which team can complete the obstacle course in the fastest time.

Challenge children to use different movements to complete certain obstacles. For example, 'can you hop in and out of the bottles?'

Provide opportunities for children to work independently and in groups to create their own obstacle courses. Provide materials for them to record their ideas and a range of open-ended resources for them to explore and experiment with. Children can take turns in leading the rest of the children around their obstacle course, demonstrating and explaining what to do.

Provide more intricate obstacle courses, such as laser beam mazes using sticks and wool.

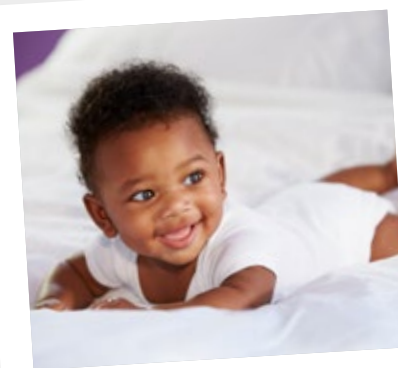
Ideas for different ages

Encourage and provide tummy time for babies and provide lots of safe and interesting items for them to explore. For example, create tummy time sensory hoops using hula hoops with a range of sensory resources attached, like as ribbons, scarfs, wooden and metal curtain rings. Lie babies inside the hoops on their tummies so they can reach, stretch and explore the attached resources.

Create a sensory obstacle course for babies to explore. Create sensory spots for children to move along using resources such as bubble wrap, sponge, carpet squares and fine sandpaper, securing these to the floor or wall with tape. Fill and secure plastic zip bags with different sensory resources which babies can move around and explore. Ideas could include paint, pom poms, dried or cooked pasta, hair gel and ice.

Attach soft surface mirrors, small teddies and ribbons on the inside of a soft tunnel or under a canopy, such as an empty cardboard box. Encourage babies to reach for the mirrors and other objects.

Secure cardboard kitchen roll tubes to the wall at different heights and angles and provide soft balls or pom poms for babies to reach and roll through the tubes.



Tummy time



Activity 3 The children go marching action rhyme

As we have already discovered, the brain responds positively to movement. Music and movement go hand in hand and action songs provide children with lots of opportunities to move in a variety of different ways, including crossing that all important midline. Songs such as 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' and 'The Wheels on the Bus' are good examples of action rhymes which encourage children to cross the midline.

Children will love learning and repeating familiar action songs and will thrive from joining in and having fun. With their growing imagination and confidence, children will also begin to experiment with, and create their own, repetitive songs and actions.



Resources

- Copy of the nursery rhyme lyrics and actions
- Space.

Learning opportunities include:

- Language skills and understanding of vocabulary
- Gross motor skills, joining in with whole body actions
- Developing memory (in repetition)
- Understanding rhythmic patterns
- Concentration and listening skills.

The children go marching action rhyme

Activity outline

- Start by teaching the children the song. The aim is for children to listen and copy the actions. (The song is sung to the tune of 'The Ants Go Marching One by One')

'The children go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah.

The children go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah.

The children go marching one by one.

They all shout, 'we're having fun.' (Shout 'we're having fun')

And they all go marching down. (Children march and bend their knees and get smaller and smaller)

To the ground, to get out of the rain. (Children curl up in a ball in on the ground)

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! (Children can tap their hands on the ground 3 times, once for each boom)'

- Ask all of the children to stand back up ready for the next verse and listen carefully for the next action

'The children go jumping one by one, hurrah, hurrah.

The children go jumping one by one, hurrah, hurrah.

The children go jumping one by one.

They all shout, 'we're having fun.' (Shout 'we're having fun')

And they all go jumping down. (Children jump and bend their knees and get smaller and smaller)

To the ground, to get out of the rain. (curling up in a ball in on the ground)

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! (Children can tap their hands on the ground 3 times, once for each boom)'

- Create more verses with different actions for children to copy. Examples could include crawling, hopping, wiggling and twirling.



Activity 3 Continued...



Making our own music

Extension ideas

Give children the opportunity to suggest and lead the action for the next verse.

Support children to create a movement circuit with different stations to complete different movements. For example, five jumping jacks, ten jumps, five hops.

Play more movement games to develop children's listening and attention skills, such as 'Simon says'.

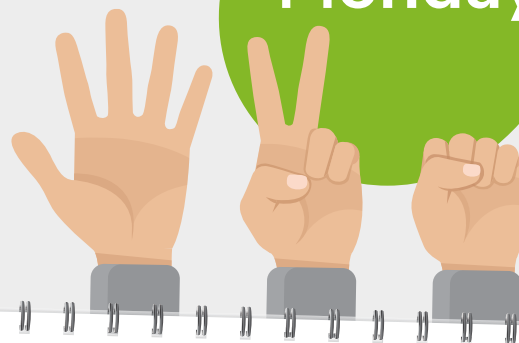


Ideas for different ages

Create a rug, rhyme and movement basket containing a soft rug and a range of objects to represent different rhymes and movements. For example, a teddy bear for 'Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Turn Around,' a teapot for 'I'm a Little Teapot' and a ball which can be rolled from adult to baby and a feather which can be thrown in the air to float slowly down to the floor. Have this available for babies to pull out on their own, as well as adults being able to get this out for a rhyme and movement session. Lay out the rug and encourage babies to pull out an item which adults can then use to support a rhyme or movement.

Create simple musical instruments for babies to shake and explore during rhyme times (made from recycled materials where possible). For example, plastic bottle shakers filled with dried rice, pasta or buttons alongside pots, pans and containers with wooden spoons for babies to beat.

Create ribbon streamers for babies and toddlers to grasp and move about to music using wooden or metal curtain rings with lengths of ribbon safely tied around.



Activity 4 Being active: Giant rock, paper, scissors

Rock, paper, scissors is a well known game which requires children to learn and follow simple rules, encouraging fast thinking, problem solving and physical movement of the hands.

In this twist on the game, giant rock, paper, scissors replaces the hand movements with larger, whole body movements to provide a more physically active challenge for children.



Resources

- Two adults – one to demonstrate and lead, the other to support the children
- Paper
- Marker pen
- Music
- Space.

Being active: Giant rock, paper, scissors

Activity outline

- Explain the rules of the game to the children. The rules of the game can be illustrated on the paper using the marker pen in whichever way you feel will support them
- In the game there are three objects - a rock, paper and scissors. When prompted, the leader and the children must choose which object they want to be (as a group) and carry out the action that represents that object
 - Rock** = curled up in tight ball
 - Paper** = laying flat on the floor on their back
 - Scissors** = standing like a star fish with arms and legs stretched out
- Just as in traditional rock, paper, scissors, each object wins over another one
 - Rock** = blunts the scissors
 - Paper** = wraps the rock
 - Scissors** = cuts the paper
- Once children are clear on the rules, start with one adult being the game leader and the other adult supporting the children to choose the object they will be. Practise until children are familiar with the game
- Stand at the front with your back to the children and play music, encouraging the children to dance
- When the music stops, explain to the children that they need to decide (as a group) if they want to be a rock, paper or scissors and to carry out the action. The adult can help the children and can let the other adult know when all of the children are in their chosen positions

Learning opportunities include:

- Gross motor skills, joining in with whole body actions
- Thinking and problem solving skills
- Learning simple rules and patterns
- Concentration and listening skills
- Memory skills.
- The adult (still with their back turned so they cannot see) then decides what object they want to be. If they choose:
 - Rock** = blunts the scissors
 - Paper** = wraps the rock
 - Scissors** = cuts the paper
- Talk to the children at the end of each round, asking questions to see if they can identify which object won and if the leader won or lost the round.



Rock, paper, scissors!

Activity 4 Continued...

Ideas for other ages

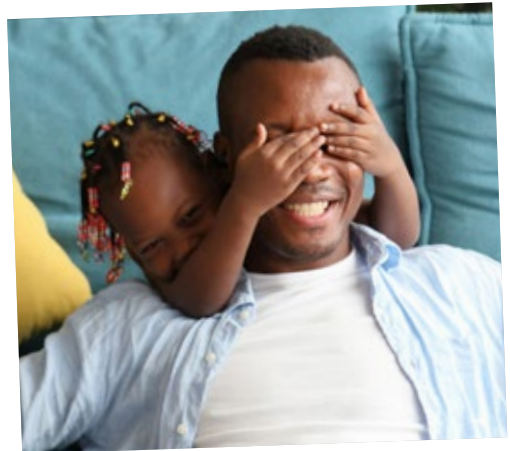


Encourage babies to develop their gross motor skills by placing objects of interest just out of reach for them to stretch and grab. Create your own busy board for babies to explore with a range of items attached to the board, such as switches, bolts and flaps to lift and reveal images.

Play games which encourage babies and toddlers to develop an understanding of rules and turn-taking, such as peek-a-boo, rolling a ball back and forth, hide and seek and copy me games.

Sing a range of action songs for babies and toddlers to join in with to help develop their gross and fine motor skills.

Play hide and seek with babies during sand play by hiding items, such as pine cones and shells, for them to look for. Partially hide these at first, supporting their understanding that things still exist when out of sight.



Peek-a-boo!

Extension ideas

Allow each child a turn at leading the game.

Teach children the traditional game of rock, paper, scissors to develop their fine motor skills. Hold a rock, paper, scissors speed round in pairs. Children can move around the circle, playing each other one to one as quickly as possible.

To add an extra physical challenge, play rock, paper, scissors and chase. In pairs, children can play the traditional game of rock, paper, scissors. The loser of the round is chased by the winner and when they tag them they stop in that spot and play the next round.

Further resources and links:

Music and Movement: The early years publication (NDNA)

<https://bit.ly/3oPv5sw>

Physical Activity in the Early Years course (NDNA)

<https://bit.ly/3oRQ0eB>

Movement and Physical Development Factsheet (NDNA)

<https://bit.ly/3JkBeoq>



Conquering challenges



Having a sing-along

National Day Nurseries Association

At NDNA, we don't just provide nursery membership, lobby government and offer training, we are dedicated to making a difference. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours. We enhance, support, nurture, cherish and challenge.

Every year we run an annual Healthy Body, Happy Me campaign to encourage better health and happiness by giving nurseries FREE resources for play, learning and fun.

Get involved with our 2022 campaign and help keep your children happy and healthy.

Important: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies. Children should always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials should always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.



National Day Nurseries Association

National Day Nurseries Association

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