

# Movement & cognition

As a mum of four children I feel I have done it all in terms of parenting styles. I have implemented the authoritarian approach: "get in the car now", the passive approach: "okay do what you want," and more recently the authoritative style "this is what I think, what do you think?" Let's be honest, we all know that there are times when we are not parenting at an ideal level but whether we can muster the strength in that moment to actually do something about it is another thing. You know what - that's okay! We all fail at times. One joy of parenting I believe is that we all have another day to wake up and do something different, to keep on learning and give it another go if things don't go as we hoped. Children are gracious and full of forgiveness, especially in their early years, so we can use this on our path of parenting.

It is on my quest for a better understanding of my children and why they do what they do, and what works best in terms of how they learn that I undertook training in the INPP (Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology) method. This method helps children by solving the underlying issues that are the cause of learning and social issues (which my children had) through physical movement. But you ask (I know because I also asked) how does simple movements of the body affect the mind? That is a fantastic question! The brain learns and is trained in many different ways. One of these ways - when we are babies - is reflexes. Now I know what you are thinking. The doctor hits your knee and it goes flying! Yes, and no. That is correct in the way that you as a person have no control over a reflex. It just happens. You can't make it happen, and you can't stop it from happening. But that is not quite the reflex I'm talking about. There are different levels of reflexes; Intra-uterine (in the womb), Primitive and Postural. The Intra-uterine are completely at the control of our genetics and our mother. The Primitives are essential for the first year or so of life. They help us survive and provide a way for us to get all we need at this age. These should then start to develop into Postural reflexes around 12 months old. This is not immediate, it is a process, yet all Primitive reflexes should be integrated into our central nervous system and we should have Postural Reflexes developed by around 4 years old.

## *A baby MUST crawl!*

The brain is trained in our early years through our movement. We are all aware that when a baby is born she knows where her food source is, and cries when she needs assistance - these are all reflexes. As she grows she then learns how to hold and move her head and arms in unilateral movements. This is also a reflex. However the greatest training of the brain comes from crawling. If nothing else but this message is taken from this article it is that A BABY MUST CRAWL! It is said that a baby must crawl for hundreds of hours to fully utilise all the development accorded at this stage. If you have a baby now at crawling age, please put them on the floor and let them move. If they cry, get down with them, talk and reassure them. A baby must learn how to defy gravity and he must learn how to make bi-lateral movements. If he does not then the child's reflexes will not be fully integrated into their central nervous system and therefore the child's ability for higher academic (cognitive) learning will be impeded later on.

## *Children are born for movement and through movement they learn.*

As a culture we are prone to placing our babies in many devices which limit their movements. I have been guilty of this for years! Car seats, high chairs, exersaucers, jolly jumpers, the list is endless. There is nothing wrong with any of these products. The issue arises when we are using all of these products all the time to the detriment of our baby moving. This is compounded as they grow up and we continue to sit them at desks, on couches and in cars. Children are born for movement and through movement they learn. So if we see our babies on the floor and they start to cry - let's resist the urge to pick them up. At times it is better to get down to their level, talk and reassure them. How about lying on your back on the floor and have your baby on your stomach. The baby is still learning about movement and enjoying the interaction with you!

After graduating from a one-year course I now can't believe that the connections between movement and cognition are so obvious. The INPP method is an individualised, drug free intervention that can help a child to become coordinated and comfortable in their own body. Once a child has the ability to control his or her body then they can access higher parts of their brain for academic or further use. If a child is still operating under Primitive reflexes then they will be continually using their cortical brain to readjust their physical body, controlling it through thought - not Postural reflex. If the brain is busy keeping the child under control it cannot be busy to learn. It is for this reason that the INPP programme offers help to children struggling academically through a process of simple movements tailored to the needs of the child. So how well do you know your child? Is their behaviour or immaturity symptomatic of choice, or retained reflexes? Can they control their body, or is their body controlling them?

For more information on the INPP method or to see if the programme can help your child please email [withoutlimitslearning@gmail.com](mailto:withoutlimitslearning@gmail.com) or visit [withoutlimitslearning.com](http://withoutlimitslearning.com).



**Leanne Seniloli** has been married for 13 years and has four children aged 13, 11, 8, and 7. It has been largely because of her own children that she became interested in child development. This has led to both informal and formal teaching over the past 12 years. She is currently working in Papatoetoe, Auckland as an early childhood educator.

Her desire to understand how children learn best is seen through her passion for study. She has completed her B Tchg (ECE), Dip. Children's writing, bi-lateral Integration training, Dip. Leadership and is a Neuro-developmental therapist. More recently her focus has been to assist children to be 'school-ready' - to have their bodies and brains communicating well so that they can succeed in the school learning environment. It is from this viewpoint that she founded Without Limits Learning Ltd, seeking to assist a range of children in this area.