

Movement and body awareness

Movement and body awareness is the understanding of 'what my body is like and how I move with it'. Body Awareness/Image is the knowledge of knowing not only what the names of the body parts are, but also what they are for. Children's body image is learned through language and doing (experience). Children need to use all three learning styles (auditory, visual and kinesthetic) to learn about their body, where it is, what parts it is made of and what it looks like. If they don't they will usually have poor body awareness

Spatial Awareness

To move effectively we need to understand our own body and concepts such as 'how big am I', 'what happens if I tip my body this way or that'. Spatial awareness is the ability to be aware of oneself in space and to see two or more objects in relation to each other and to oneself.

Spatial Awareness can be split into two:

Conscious awareness: new experience, thinking/conscious about where you are.

Unconscious awareness: knowing, practice e.g. going to sit on a chair and knowing how wide your body is in relation to the chair.

Children are still finding out where they fit in relation to space and other objects, in ECC's you often see children trying to fit into spaces, especially at mat time, where they will not fit. Some children have to touch everything; some don't know correct distances e.g. talking to someone right up in their face. This is the same when they start writing. They need to learn how much space to leave between letters, words, sentences etc. In understanding these relationships, children come to learn concepts such as direction, distance and location.

Music and Movement

Music and movement is a great way to teach body awareness and also the language of body parts. A child learns through repetition and doing things over and over, until the activity or task becomes automatic. Movement, music and play encourage cognitive development.

Music enhances the development of language and listening skills and can also be therapeutic and educational. While moving, singing and playing, a child learns through hearing the appropriate language associated with the task, e.g. under, over, behind, in front, on top of etc.

Music also enhances body rhythm which is a prerequisite for skills such as timing (required for crossing a road), mathematical concepts, memory, hand-eye and foot-eye coordination.

It is important that the music you play is not too fast. Action songs need to be slow enough for the children to follow. Every movement a child makes has to be thought through and processed.

Language

Children understand what you say (receptive language) long before they begin to speak (expressive language). Your child learns through repetition. The more they hear you talking, the sooner they will begin to mimic and copy you.

Children are more likely to learn and understand what words are by physically doing things and hearing the language. The more a child is talked to the more words they understand and pick up. The language of body and direction needs to be learned together.

Real= Learning a word in the real sense, e.g. the child physically performing the word and hearing it – going under something.

Symbolic comes into play especially when children are in the classroom e.g. writing on the page letters go on the lines – the tail of the 'g' goes under the line. The problem is highlighted more when children are asked to write on blank paper. Where is the point of reference when there is no line to tell them where 'under' is? Therefore, always draw lines.

Top of head/ Top of toe (how can the top be at my head but all the way down at the bottom of my body too..... confusing unless they have experience and language to accompany that understanding).

Memory

Short Term Memory: last from a few seconds to 1 minute

Long Term Memory: lasts from a minute to weeks or even years

Visual Memory: a person's ability to remember what they have seen

Auditory Memory: a person's ability to remember what they have heard

When giving instructions to children you must remember that they must fall within the memory capacity of the child.

In young children even though they cannot communicate or respond to an instruction, they can often understand it. A child can retain its age less two things in the short term memory, e.g. 3 year old can remember 1 thing, 4 year old= 2 things, an adult= 7 things in order.

When giving an instruction, ask the child (if the child is able) to repeat the instruction. This holds it in the STM (Short Term Memory). You can only retain information in your STM for 10 seconds, but saying it back helps to retain information in the STM. After giving an instruction, say nothing until the child has completed the task. As soon as something is said, the child is distracted and the information being held in the STM disappears.