

Primitive Reflex Integration Exercise Ideas

What are Primitive Reflexes?

Automatic motor responses that originate from our primitive or survival brain.

Why does Integration of Reflexes Matter?

Integration of primitive reflexes lay the foundation for higher level learning. Retained primitive reflexes or active primitive reflexes can interfere with the development of more mature, voluntary movement patterns including postural reflexes, balance, ability to move through the environment safely, as well as bilateral coordination. This can have the appearance of clumsiness or the use of excess energy. This can affect performance at home, school, and during play/sports.

Common Primitive Reflexes

Moro Reflex (startle reflex)

Possible challenges include hyperactivity, extreme sensitive to sudden movement, noise or light, sleeping problems, impulsive behaviors, inappropriate behavioral responses, food sensitivities, emotional and social immaturity, poor adaptation skills.

Exercise- Starfish

-Begin seated on a chair or therapy ball.

-Curl whole body in crossing arms and legs and bring them into your body with the same arm/leg on top (right arm/leg over left arm/leg)

-Slowly stretch out arms/legs/body to a 5 second count (starfish position). If on a ball, you can lay back on the ball

-Slowly to a 5 second count return to curled position with the other arm/leg on top

This is one rep. Try to complete 10 reps twice a day.

TLR Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex

If not fully integrated the alignment of the head with the rest of the body will be uncoordinated. Proper head and neck alignment is necessary for balance, visual tracking, auditory processing, and organized muscle tone, which are all vital to the ability to focus and pay attention.

Exercise- Superman/Banana

-Lay on stomach

-Stretch out arms and legs

-At the same time lift your head, arms, and legs off the ground while keeping them straight (like superman)

-Hold for 10-15 seconds if able

-Roll onto your back

-Lift head, arms, and legs together off the ground tucking your chin to look at your belly (like a banana)

-Hold for 10-15 seconds if able

This is one rep. Try to complete 10 reps twice a day.

STNR Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex

When retained, children can have difficulty with integration of upper and lower portions of the body, sitting posture, typical muscle tone development, and poor hand-eye coordination.

Exercise- Cat/Cow Pose

- Begin on your hands and knees

- Slowly bring your head up looking toward the ceiling while also pushing your belly arched towards the floor (like a cow)

- Slowly bring your head down looking at your knees while also arching or rounding your back up (like a cat)

This is one rep. Try to complete 10 reps twice a day.

Spinal Galant Reflex

When the Spinal Galant reflex is not fully integrated, we might see difficulties with potty training, concentration, posture, and digestion and can cause excessive fidgeting and hip movement while seated in a chair.

Exercise- Snow Angels

- Lay on your back with your arms at your side and legs straight and together

- Slowly move your arms away from your body and up above your head while keeping them on the floor/ground and keeping them straight

- At the same time move your legs apart from each other while keeping them on the floor/ground and keeping them straight

- Slowly return to the start position

This is one rep. Try to complete 10 reps twice a day.

Sandra Dicks, MOT, OTR/L