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Primitive Reflexes

The Retained Primitive Reflexes Preventing Kids from Crossing the Midline

This article provides information about the retained Primitive Reflexes that prevent kids from crossing the midline. Integrated Learning Strategies (ILS) is a learning and academic center. As a reminder, ILS is not a health care provider and none of our materials or services provide a diagnosis or treatment of

a specific condition or learning challenge you may see in your child or student. If you seek a diagnosis or treatment for your child or student, please contact a trained professional who can provide an evaluation of the child.

One of the main learning areas new students are evaluated for by therapists is crossing the midline. Cross lateral movements, or **crossing the midline** of the body, activates both the right and the left hemispheres of the brain. It helps balance the brain so both sides can work together for better emotional and physical regulation.

What some people may not know is retained Primitive Reflexes can play a role in preventing kids from crossing the midline. When certain retained Primitive Reflexes are not integrated, the exchange of information between the two sides of the brain is not possible without re-integration.

Why is crossing the midline important?

It may not seem important, but when a child can't cross the midline of their body, it creates disconnections in both sides of the brain. This can cause problems in many learning areas because the right side (emotional) can't connection with the left (logical) side. It may lead to trouble in behavior, emotional grounding or learning delays.

The midline of the body is an imaginary line that splits the body from right to left. Cross lateral movements activate the brain and get both sides of the body working together so the body can move in a more integrated way.

Crossing the midline provides better communication in the brain for the following:

- More integrated and higher reasoning
- Auditory processing
- Visual processing
- Proprioception
- Logical thinking

Children who can't cross the midline may struggle with functional skills like tying the laces of shoes or fastening buttons. When it comes to reading, you may notice the child skipping words or they may have trouble tracking.

Retained Reflexes and Crossing the Midline

If a child struggles to cross the midline when participating in functional or learning activities, there are two retained reflexes that may be responsible. Unless integrated, the child may continue to struggle in areas of learning development as they grow older. Without integration exercises, the reflexes will remain active.

ATNR Reflex

If the [ATNR reflex](#) is retained, the child's arms will extend outward when the head is turned to the side. This makes it difficult for the child to lift their hand to their mouth or cross the midline of the body. For these kids, they may have had trouble sucking or bringing objects to their mouth when they were infants. It can also create trouble when eating or using utensils during mealtime.

[Research](#) shows the ATNR is considered one of the most important midline reflexes that depend on cross lateral movements for integration. If the ATNR reflex is retained, it becomes a physical barrier. The body will want to continue using only one side at a time during daily functions.

When a child retains the ATNR, they may struggle with mixed dominance and choosing a hand for writing automatically. Movement by the child has to be made consciously instead of it coming to them naturally.

Children who have a retained ATNR reflex may have trouble with reading and writing. The child's eyes have trouble crossing the midline when tracking words as they read from right to left. And, when it comes to writing, a right-handed child may show signs of difficulty as they write on the left side of the page.

The child's balance is also affected when there is a lack of lateral movement. Many activities that require balance, activate the retained ATNR. This may make the child stumble, fall over, trip or appear clumsy.

You may also notice other motor planning skills impacted when students are evaluated in school or in therapy sessions. As a result, kids with a retained ATNR, will often adjust their bodies in their chairs to compensate for the way they read and write. You may find a child pushing back

their chair or leaning back so they can write without bending their arms.

Midline activities can be done in combination with additional reflex exercises to integrate the ATNR reflex.

Moro Reflex

Children with a retained **Moro reflex** benefit from doing more midline crossing activities because of its connection with sensory and emotions. Cross lateral movements help calm, regulate and ground the child's emotions and sensory sensitivities.

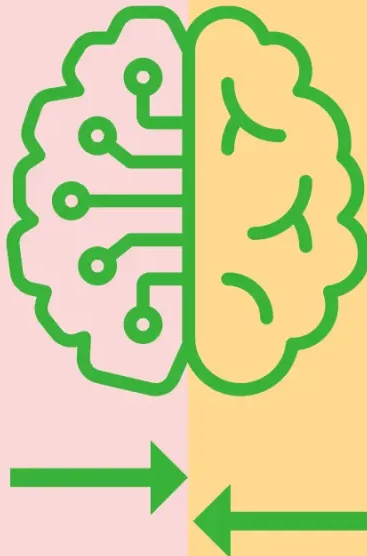
Midline activities also aid in integrating the Moro reflex to help establish those connections between the right and left sides of the brain. As communication and bridges are built through midline movements, the brain begins to think more logically instead of emotionally. In addition, the heightened sensitivities begin to regulate and the child's tolerance becomes higher.

RETAINED REFLEXES & CROSSING THE MIDLINE

Crossing the midline activates both hemispheres of the brain, promoting physical and emotional regulation

ATNR REFLEX

Asymmetric tonic neck reflex, or ATNR, is one of the primitive reflexes that babies experience as part of brain development.



MORO REFLEX

The Moro reflex is a primitive reflex that is multi-sensory and responds to various senses such as noise, smell, touch, and sight

When the ATNR does not integrate correctly, the effects of the retained reflex can cause:

- **Reading and writing delays**
- **Difficulty with handwriting**
- **Poor visual tracking**
- **Affected balance**

If the Moro reflex does not become fully integrated, the effects of the retained reflex can cause:

- **Dislike loud noises**
- **Easily distracted**
- **Difficulty with change**
- **Sensitivity to bright lights**

RETAINED REFLEXES AND CROSSING THE MIDLINE POSTER

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The Retained Reflexes and Crossing the Midline poster is perfect for classrooms and therapy centers to help parents understand the impacts of retained Primitive Reflexes. This poster provides information targeting midline crossing and how one or more retained reflexes may impact a child’s ability to cross the midline. Use this poster as a guide to determine if a child has any signs or symptoms of a retained Primitive Reflex.

Immediately following payment, the PDF document will be available electronically and sent to your inbox. **All sales are final.**

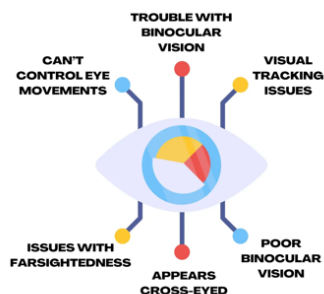
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Retained Reflexes & Fine Motor

When a child retains certain Primitive Reflexes, their fine motor skills may be compromised

If the ATNR Reflex is not properly integrated, it can affect a child's reading, spelling and writing abilities - Poor handwriting - Difficulty spacing letters/words - Fine motor control - Letter formation - Pencil grip - Writing left to right (crossing the midline) ATNR REFLEX	Children with a retained STNR reflex may have problems with sitting still at their desk and learning - Hand - eye - coordination - Leaning on desk - Writing becomes tiresome - Lacks upper body strength - Poor posture - Learning challenges STNR REFLEX	When the Palmer reflex lingers, it has a residual effect on a child's overall fine motor development - Cutting with scissors - Using crayons to color - Picking up small objects - Controlling utensils while eating - Writes letters backwards PALMER REFLEX
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Playground Equipment that enhances your child's Vestibular System

Swinging Swings come in all shapes and sizes from classic swings to tire swings and hammocks. The rocking motion can soothe an overactive and fidgeting child or stimulate one that is dragging. Monkey bars are also good for swinging. The way the arms have to take turns is also good for promoting coordination.	Balancing Some playgrounds have balance beams to traverse or stepping-stones to step across. Testing their balance is the only way for their bodies to learn better balance. Improved balance can help a child sit upright in their chair better so they spend less time with their head on their desk.
Jumping Trampolines aren't common fixtures at public parks, but they are common in backyards and trampoline parks are growing in popularity. Some of the parks have obstacle courses as well, which are perfect for encouraging skillful movement. Or, you can just buy a small fitness trampoline.	Climbing Climbing trains the body to be aware of its surroundings and tests weight and strength against gravity. Rock walls are great for practicing climbing and stimulating the imagination. Stairs, ladders, and walls with a climbing rope are all great for promoting your little ones' vestibular systems.
Spinning Spinning is a motion that most kids seek out on their own. They spin with their arms out in open spaces and they roll down hills. They are few and far between, but some parks still have merry-go-rounds. If none of your local parks are rocking those gems, you can always get a sit-and-spin toy.	

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Primitive Reflexes Roadmap

If you are interested in learning more about retained Primitive Reflexes and how they affect a child's learning development, download the Primitive Reflexes Roadmap here:



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