

PRIMITIVE REFLEXES & ADHD



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condition. Primitive reflexes are automatic movements that are exhibited by infants but are expected to integrate as a child grows. In this blog post, we'll delve into the concept of primitive reflexes and their potential link to ADHD.

What Are Primitive Reflexes?

Primitive reflexes, also known as infantile or neonatal reflexes, are involuntary movements that originate in the brainstem and serve as protective mechanisms in early infancy. They are essential for survival and development during the first few months of life. These reflexes include the Moro reflex, the Babinski reflex, the rooting reflex, and many others.

The Moro reflex, for instance, is triggered when an infant senses a sudden change in their position or experiences a loud noise. In response, the infant may arch their back, extend their limbs, and cry. As the child grows, these reflexes typically become less prominent and eventually integrate into more controlled, purposeful movements.

Primitive Reflexes and ADHD

While primitive reflexes are crucial during infancy, their persistence beyond the expected timeframe may have an impact on a child's development and behavior. Recent research suggests that some individuals with ADHD may exhibit a higher rate of retained primitive reflexes compared to those without the disorder. This has led to the hypothesis that there may be a connection between the two.

1. **Sensory Integration Theory:** One theory proposes that retained primitive reflexes interfere with the process of sensory integration. Sensory integration is the brain's ability to process and organize sensory information from the environment. When primitive reflexes persist, they can disrupt this process, leading to difficulties in focus, attention, and self-regulation, which are common symptoms of ADHD.
2. **Motor Coordination:** Primitive reflexes play a role in motor coordination, and their persistence may lead to motor challenges in individuals with ADHD. These motor difficulties can affect a person's ability to sit still, concentrate, or follow instructions, contributing to the hyperactivity and impulsivity seen in ADHD.
3. **Emotional Regulation:** Primitive reflexes can also impact emotional regulation. For example, a retained Moro reflex might make a child more prone to anxiety and emotional outbursts, which are common in individuals with ADHD.
4. **The Impact of Early Trauma:** Retained primitive reflexes can be associated with early traumatic experiences, and such traumas have been suggested as potential risk factors for ADHD. Trauma can have lasting effects on a child's neurological development and may contribute to the development of ADHD symptoms.

Treatment Options

Given the potential connection between retained primitive reflexes and ADHD, some therapeutic approaches aim to address these reflexes to alleviate ADHD symptoms. These may include:

1. **Neurodevelopmental Movement Programs:** These programs, like the INPP Method, use specific movements and exercises designed to help integrate retained reflexes and improve sensory integration.
2. **Occupational Therapy:** Occupational therapists can work with children to address motor coordination and sensory processing issues, helping to improve their ability to focus and self-regulate.
3. **Physical Activity:** Regular physical activity and sports can help children with ADHD develop better motor coordination and control.

Conclusion

The relationship between primitive reflexes and ADHD is an evolving field of study, and more research is needed to fully understand the link and potential treatment implications. While it's essential to remember that ADHD is a complex condition with a multitude of contributing factors, addressing retained primitive reflexes may offer a valuable avenue for supporting those affected by this disorder. If you or someone you know is dealing with ADHD, it's essential to consult with healthcare professionals who can provide a thorough evaluation and recommend appropriate interventions to manage symptoms and improve overall well-being.

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