

## Severe Dyspraxia: Helpful techniques for facilitating function

Dyspraxia is a disorder that affects motor skill development. Children with severe dyspraxia have significant trouble planning and completing motor tasks. Dyspraxia is the inability to carry out a cognitive intent. The child intends to move a particular way, but the neurological signal doesn't reliably get to the right muscles to move them consistently.

Children with severe dyspraxia often show intent to use their hands or bodies, therefore we must help maximize their intentions. ***Every move counts!***

- Wait time! Present objects/activities, then allow for long wait time. (Can be up to 1 minute for some, especially Rett syndrome.)
- Give simple verbal cues. Too much other sensory information can block or scramble the child's attempts to motor plan.
- Bring meaningful activities within reach, *to the child* when possible and when necessary.
- Use objects & activities with inherent qualities. Knobs, lids, switches that "mold" to shape or placement of hand.
- Decrease the use of hand-over-hand techniques, especially when accessing communication. This tactile sensory input can often "scramble" and interfere with attempts to plan a motor movement. Some children may actually pull away from someone's hand, thus learning the opposite movement.
- Consider sensory preferences and aversions and look for environmental barriers.
- Keep consequences natural and tasks in context (e.g. Not giving a food item as a reward for hitting a switch).
- Provide clear expectations. Model, model, model what you would like the child to do or learn.
- Consider eye gaze as a tool if motor planning is difficult.

**For more ideas, please see Linda Burkhart:**

<http://www.lburkhart.com/Rett%20Apraxia%20and%20communication.pdf>