

PRAXIS



What is Praxis?

Praxis is the ability to carry out an action by 1. having an idea (known as ideation), 2. figuring out how to carry out this idea (known as motor planning), and then 3. executing it. It involves incorporating old, familiar skills with new skills when performing novel tasks. Praxis is learned as we develop and grow by being given a variety of challenges and learning opportunities. With praxis, our brain is able to take in sensations from the body and plan and sequence our movements accordingly, all without conscious thinking. In other words, the movements become automatic. Praxis helps with:

- Completing daily self-care routines such as showering, getting dressed, styling our hair, and brushing our teeth
- Coordinating movements in order to compete in sports
- Using proper fine motor skills to use utensils, write, and manage fasteners (buttons, zippers)
- Riding a bike or driving a car
- Knowing how to play with new toys (i.e. when given blocks, you build a tower; when given a bouncy ball, you play handball)

Potential signs that your child may have difficulties with praxis (known as dyspraxia):

- MAY AVOID NEW OR UNFAMILIAR TASKS AND INSTEAD, STICK WITH ACTIVITIES THAT THEY KNOW WELL
- MAY PLAY WITH THE SAME FEW TOYS OVER AND OVER, DESPITE RECEIVING NEW TOYS
- MAY HAVE TROUBLE FIGURING OUT BODY MOVEMENTS WHEN CARRYING OUT ACTIONS (I.E. ON PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, DURING SIMON SAYS)
- MAY HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH SELF-CARE SKILLS AND REQUIRES A PARENT TO HELP GET THEM STARTED
- MAY HAVE TROUBLE ORGANIZING DESK OR ROOM
- MAY TAKE LONGER TO LEARN NEW SKILLS (I.E. TYING SHOES, DRESSING) THAN OTHER KIDS
- MAY APPEAR RIGID IN THEIR PLAYING WITH OTHERS

Ways to Help Your Child Improve Praxis

The following suggestions should be carried out under the guidance of a licensed occupational therapist:

- Breaking down steps of an activity into smaller, more attainable steps
- Activities involving imitation such as Follow the Leader and Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Pretending the floor is lava and having your child figure out a way to get from point A to point B without touching the ground
- Playing music and encouraging your child to come up with their own dance moves
- Activities that require planning and coordination of the body such as Twister and Hands and Feet Hopscotch
- Practicing throwing at a target. Challenge your child to throw at a target while moving once they master hitting target when stationary.
- Activities involving simple verbal directions such as Simon Says
- Encouraging your child to complete multi-step crafts (i.e. coloring, cutting, then gluing)

Note that when your child is participating in new activities or unfamiliar play experiences, they may become frustrated due to difficulties with planning and coordination, so it is important to provide them with verbal encouragement and, in some cases, physical assistance the first couple tries.



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