



Your Future in MIND

Now you've GOT it!

Occupational Therapy Tips for Developing Body Awareness

Developing “body awareness” is an important foundation skill for children. Later skills such as holding a pencil, throwing a ball, swimming, moving through an obstacle course, and maintaining “personal space” in groups can be difficult without sufficient awareness of where our body parts are and where they are in relation to other people and objects. Here are some activity ideas to improve body awareness:

- Create a puzzle of the child (photo mounted on cardboard or craft foam). Cut it in half (top and bottom) and once successful, progressively cut it into smaller segments (e.g. arms, legs, trunk, and head, etc.). Try front and back photos!
- Have pictures or picture symbols of major body parts (e.g. foot, hand, face, etc.) and allow the student to select what body part he wants tickled (e.g. with a feather), squeezed, brushed (with a soft surgical brush), etc. Encourage him to offer that body part once he has picked it.
- Use songs and games like "Head and Shoulders", "If you're happy and you know it, touch your.....", "Hokey Pokey", "Simon Says." and change the words to reinforce the body parts you are focusing on.
- Make handprints in art, paint with fingers, hands, feet, etc.
- Put stickers on body parts. Child names the part while removing the sticker
- Wooden puzzles that are build-a-person or dressing-a-person.
- Have an outline of a body on the wall and add the features one part at a time each day or two; encourage the students to look for, and identify, what is new or different.
- Have a dress-up station with clothes, shoes, gloves, jewelry, hats and a mirror.
- Make an outline of the student and have her paint it, or stick on cutouts of the major body parts (hands, face, eyes, etc.).
- Finger puppets, finger rhyme songs, rubbing lotion on each finger, finger print activities, piano, and guitar are great for improving awareness of hands and fingers.
- Proprioceptive input provides increased awareness of the body's position in relative space; this is achieved with activities where children push, pull, carry, or lift heavier items (or themselves!). Examples are carrying groceries, pulling a wagon, shoveling, monkey bars, animal walks, swimming, and gymnastics.
- Practice games where you “Move like ...”. Examples are shaking head yes/no, throwing a ball, growing like a tree or flower, pretending to be a particular animal, sucking a straw, your head is a spoon scraping a bowl, your legs are a big pair of scissors, you are trying to high five someone behind you, you are walking on a tightrope, and walking on a windy day.
- Yoga, gymnastics, martial arts, swimming, dance, and other playground and sports activities develop body awareness.