Primitive Reflex Integration Exercises

Kathy Johnson, MS Ed
Pyramid of Potential, Inc.
PO Box 3369
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-260-3937
How the Brain Develops:

In order to create new neuro-pathways in the brain, like learn something new, you must repeat the information over and over again. Why? The brain has trillions of neurons with dendrites (like wires) attached. Learning and brain development happens when two dendrites come together and make a connection, or synapse. If you repeat that learning day after day for 3 to 4 weeks, a habit is formed. If the learning is not repeated again, the connection is lost – use it or lose it. The connection becomes solid when a myelin sheath is created around it – like wrapping a wire with electrical tape except that instead of tape, the myelin is made from fat.

Why do we care about the brain?

The reason a younger person may have learning difficulties is due to never creating the connections in the first place during the important early stages of development. These exercises recreate that development from the first year of life. For a person under 40, do the exercises every day for 30 days, take off 30 days, then repeat once more for 30 days. That should be enough to see significant changes.

This is not a silver bullet. If there are absolutely no changes within the first 30 days, look deeper into physiology – body and mind health. Try again once any of those issues have been resolved.

The reason a person may lose connections is due to trauma or age. As we get older beyond the age of 40, our foundation of brain development - reflexes which were “integrated” during the first year of birth - become “disintegrated” until by the time we reach old age, we look more like babies.

These reflexes can be integrated at any age, but beyond the age of 40, they must become part of a daily routine in order to stay integrated. The following exercises take about 15 minutes a day and should be completed every day. Even if you do not see all of the symptoms in yourself, do all of the exercises to maintain your brain.
Fear Paralysis Reflex Integration

To help with extreme anxiety and hypersensitivity, especially when Starfish for integrating Moro is not working. Also panic attacks, oppositional or aggressive behavior and OCD. This reflex normally integrates before birth, so can be seen with pre-mature birth or trauma during pregnancy. All exercises are to be done VERY slowly, and long slow intake of breath when straightening; long slow exhale when bending limbs.

From *Movements that Heal*, Harald Blomberg

1. Lie on back, arms and legs at side
2. Leg swings:
   a. Bend knees, feet on floor
   b. Leave upper body in place while bringing knees to right side
   c. Bring knees back to center in original position
   d. Bring knees to left side and back
   e. Repeat 3 times
3. Side to Side legs
   a. Bend right knee, keeping leg on floor as much as possible
   b. Straighter
   c. Bend the left leg, then straighten
   d. Repeat 3 times
4. Frog Legs
   a. Bend both knees at the same time, similar to Side to Side legs
   b. Straighten legs and repeat 3 times
5. Knees toward chest  
   a. Draw knees to chest then straighten and repeat 3 times

6. Cross over legs  
   a. Cross right leg over left then back to straight  
   b. Cross left leg over right then back to straight  
   c. Repeat 3 times

7. Cross over arms  
   a. Cross right arm over chest then back to straight  
   b. Cross left arm over chest then back to straight  
   c. Cross both arms with right first then left on top; straight  
   d. Now the opposite:  
   e. Cross left arm over chest then back to straight  
   f. Cross right arm over chest then back to straight  
   g. Cross both arms with left first then right on top; straight  
   h. Repeat 3 times
**Starfish Exercise to integrate the Moro Reflex**

May help with:

- Visual problems – fixation (unable to keep eyes on object for 10+ seconds), excessive blinking, doesn’t maintain eye contact
- Light or auditory hypersensitivity (hears better than others)
- Anxiety (test, separation), mood swings, difficulty accepting criticism, dislike of change, emotionally sensitive

1. Lie back on a chair, bean bag or sofa with pillow under back
2. Tilt head back, arms up and out, legs out wide
3. While breathing out, to the count of 5:
   a. Bring arms in and crossed, right over left
   b. Bring legs in at the same time, right over left
4. While breathing in, to the count of 5, bring arms and legs back out
5. While breathing out, to the count of five
   a. Bring arms in and crossed, LEFT over Right
   b. Bring legs in at the same time, LEFT over Right
6. Repeat step #4
7. Repeat entire cycle, steps 3 – 6, 2 more times
Fingers 1-2-3 to integrate the Grasp (Palmar) Reflex

May help with:
- Poor handwriting
- Poor manual dexterity
- Speech and articulation issues

1. Sequentially touch the thumb of one hand to the pointer, then the middle finger, the ring finger, and the pinky.
2. Then go backwards from pinky to pointer.
3. Do this at least 3 times with each hand.
4. Work up to being able to do Fingers 1-2-3 with one hand at the same time as doing Fly to the Moon (next page) for 30 seconds.
5. Be sure that fingers are rounded, separated, and the touch is light and deliberate.
6. This is best if completed with a metronome set to 120 beats per minute. The metronome increases concentration and processing speed. It has been used to improve word retrieval.
Fly to the Moon exercise to integrate the Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex

May help with:

- Poor posture
- Weak muscle tone
- Visual problems with refocusing near to far and far to near
- Spatial problems (bumping into furniture)
- Poor sequencing and organization skills
- Poor sense of time

1. Lie on stomach.
2. Lift up chest off the floor, leaning on one elbow, other arm up.
3. Move one hand slowly to the side, then slowly stretch it away. The entire time, watch the fingers.
4. Slowly bring thumb back to the nose, then repeat again and again for 30 seconds total.
5. Repeat on other side.
6. Rest with chest down or in child’s pose (Yoga position) if back becomes tired.
7. Repeat steps 1-5 two more times.
8. If 30 seconds is too difficult, start with 10 seconds and work up. If having one hand up is too difficult, work up to 30 seconds without lifting hands, then add them in.
Slow Angels to integrate the Spinal Galant Reflex

May help with:

- Bladder control
- Poor concentration
- Poor short term memory
- Sensory integration problems
- Auditory processing difficulties
- Near focusing problems
- Difficulty with reading

1. Lie on back with legs closed and hands at the side.
2. Very slowly do the movements of a snow angel, by bringing the arms up and opening the legs as wide as possible. Arms stay on the floor as much as possible. This should take 30 seconds.
3. Now, for 30 seconds, close the legs and bring the arms to the starting position.
4. Repeat 2 more times.
Lizard exercise to integrate the Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex

May help with:

- Midline crossing
- Marching and skipping
- Poor handwriting
- Convergence problems (near to far refocusing)
- Right-left confusion
- Visual-perceptual difficulties – reversals of b/d, u/n, saw/was
- Poor expression of ideas on paper

1. Lie on floor with left arm down at side, left leg straight
2. Head is pointed right, right arm is bent, thumb at nose, right leg is bent
3. Turn head to left
4. Right arm, with palm down, scrapes the floor until it reaches the knee
5. Straighten the right leg, pushing the foot along the floor, until the body is straight
6. Wait 3 seconds
7. Bring left knee up to the left hand
8. With palm to the floor, bring left hand to the nose
9. Wait 3 seconds
10. Turn head to right
11. Straighten left arm, pushing palm
12. Straighten left leg, pushing foot
13. Wait 3 seconds
14. Bring right knee up to the right hand
15. With palm to the floor, bring right hand to the nose
16. Wait 3 seconds
17. Repeat steps 3 through 16 two more times
18. Action should look like a lizard pushing himself through the sand
Get Pumped Up to integrate the Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex

May help with:

- Poor posture
- Poor eye-hand coordination
- Tracking problems – following a moving object smoothly
- Convergence problems – near to far refocusing
- Near focusing problems
- Slow with copying tasks
- Attention difficulties

1. Start from a hands and knees table position, weight on arms, looking up to ceiling.
2. Rock back until the head is down looking back between the knees.
3. Slowly rock back up to the beginning point.

It should be done one for every two seconds; complete 30. Too difficult? Do one for every 4 seconds and complete 15. Put a pillow under knees.

Most people only have to complete one 30 day challenge. Trauma can cause regression, so be aware that disease or daily emotional trauma such as abuse or age-related decline (ARD) may require exercises to be continued.