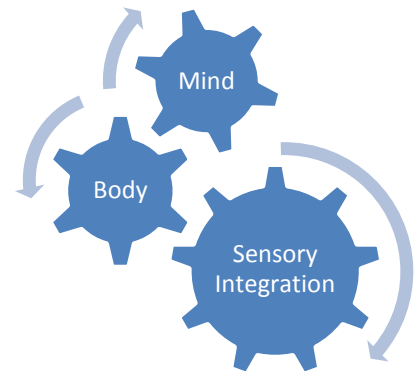


What Does Crawling have to do with School?

Remember playpens? They still exist, but they aren't really called playpens anymore. Now they're Pack'n'Plays and the like, but I can't recall the last time I actually saw a child in one (unless he/she was sleeping and in someone else's home). Tom Vanderbilt, who isn't either for or against the playpen, cites in an article its history and noticed our general movement away from it. From its inception, there has been controversy: [used] "as a lazy excuse to keep their babies out of the way" said one article in 1966. Of course its name alone makes it difficult to feel great about, especially these days; *playPEN*, so animal-like. So, what's the alternative? Most parents choose childproofing our homes, of course there are the musical swings, the bouncy chairs, the rolling circular seats and then there's Baby Einstein and early "screen time". What is it that we're trying to do? We want our kids to be safe, be stimulated, be learning, be entertained, be happy, be confident and know they're loved.

These are valid desires. Are they also serving our kids and their futures well? What about their sensory stimulation? Too much time at the angle of the car seat, we know is not healthy for babies, as stated by Judy Jennings, PT MA and Gayle Loyd, M.Ed./DMT. As a cognitive/perceptual assessor and trainer at Synap2it Learning Center, who sees kids with underdeveloped sensory skills, I wonder if we've traded one freedom for another. Now we see kids sitting for sometimes long periods of their day in infant carriers that allow for very little freedom or even movement. They do get to go everywhere in this way and that can't be bad, but they are so constricted in them. In that position they have very little opportunity for movement, therefore are not getting the developmentally necessary sensory stimulation. Does this matter? Well, yes. Early movement and exploration are foundational learning, attentiveness and sequential/motor planning in the future.



When in a playpen, their world is generally safe and we don't have to say "no" to them as often as when they're exploring and trying to get into things that are potentially dangerous. When kids don't naturally get tummy-time, then crawling, then standing and pulling themselves up, they miss out on physical development that will likely impact their learning at some point. This may manifest as difficulty following multiple step directions, making own decisions, even reading, math and writing. Children benefit from entertaining themselves in a safe environment where they get to lay, sit, play, stand, walk and play. Using a Pack'n'Play or another way, it is important that children get the kind of time to safely explore their world using all their senses and muscles.

Don't fret; these cognitive and perceptual skills can be developed. A child may be gifted, have no label at all, ADHD or a learning difference; cognitive training will benefit them.

Written by Nancy Feldmann, Education Director of Synap2it Learning Center of Severna Park. Nancy works with all kinds of students to help them "learn how to learn" more efficiently using cognitive and perceptual skills training. "We see every day that the use of physical exercise to strengthen the mind/body connection makes a difference," says Nancy. 410-544-8666