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Pushing our Children to 'Learn' Assessing neuromotor readiness for Learning

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Pushing our Children to 'Learn' Assessing Neuro Motor Readiness for Learning

The joys and excitement of a child turning five is celebrated as a rite of passage. The child growing up, going to 'big school' and putting on their new uniform brings delight to parents and teachers alike. But when is a child really ready for school? How can we tell if they are going to succeed or not? Are there markers that ensure that the child is developmentally ready? Or do they turn five and are magically able to adjust?

We know that child development is fluid - children develop faster or slower than others, but generally all children follow the same milestones of development despite country, culture and race. This development is physical, mental and emotional and these factors are interrelated in a holistic way meaning they are all interdependent on each other. For example, the maturity of the emotions is largely dependent on maturity of the mind, just as maturity of the mind is impacted by maturity of the emotions. However there has been little discussion as to how the maturity of the physical body also impacts mental maturity and agility and visa-versa. Can we know if a child is ready for school by reading their physical capabilities?

The truth is we can! We can see if a child will start school on the upper hand or not if we look past the a,b,c's and 1, 2, 3's. As teachers we have tended to do away with assessing children too

young - and for good reason. However, we have also done away with observing and ensuring children reach their developmental milestones physically. The assumption is that "all children will get there eventually" and while this may be true in part it does not help the child and adults working with children best provide for their physical development alongside their mental and emotional development. In fact, if children do not meet their physical milestones it can hinder their progress in other areas. And don't we all want to give our children the best possible start? Why allow delay if it is not necessary.

Let me explain. Primitive reflexes are apart of our central nervous system and are meant to be there until around one year of age. It is at this time that they begin to transition into postural reflexes. We need these postural reflexes to help defy gravity, give us good posture and fluid movement all through life. But most importantly these postural reflexes allow us to continually

operate in our mature brain, that is the part at the front of the head which problem solves, evaluates and does other executive functions. Without getting too technical - primitive reflexes come from the brain stem and spinal cord. Postural reflexes release these so that we are free to operate in our mid-brain and cortex - the thinking brain.

"...postural reflexes allow us to continually operate in our mature brain..."

It is for this reason that assessment of the primitive and postural reflexes at 5 will determine the physical maturity of the child and subsequently the ability to operate in their cortex long-term. Primitive reflexes are like a 'trigger' to a child's brain. Any movement of the head or limbs causes different reflexes to operate to distract and interrupt the child's processes. Some reflexes such as the ATNR will even cause involuntary movement of the arms upon head rotation. I'm sure you know this child. The one with the messy sloping handwriting, or the one who children always say "he hit me" only to have the child emphatically deny it. Or the one who is constantly 'clumsy'. This is because reflexes are not conscious. They are rooted in our subconscious primitive minds. It's cause and effect. Turn head, arm goes out.

However, with a specific movement programme tailored to release these reflexes, the child can be free of the annoying and damaging effects of them. This programme can be undertaken at home one on one with a parent, or in preschools and schools by trained teachers. Age is no barrier for the programme it can work at any age, yet at 5 we can see how the child will transition into primary school and support this process. The assessment tool also helps us recognise the signs and symptoms of neuro motor immaturity in the classroom.

No longer do children need to live with the emotional insecurity and fight/flight reactions of the Moro reflex. Or the inability to ride a bike, or handwriting issues, mid-line crossing and co-ordination difficulties of the ATNR. Or the postural distractions, inability to swim, and constant wriggle of the STNR. Even issues with speech and language can be helped and healed through remediating the TLR. When we understand what is causing the behaviours we can then set about freeing the child from them.

These are all constant issues for children every day of their life that the adults around them and they themselves are largely unaware of. They live with them continuously and when it is time for big school the adults wonder why they cannot still hold a pencil, draw a circle, or sit still on the mat. They aren't 'naughty kids', their bodies and brains just aren't communicating well yet. But they can. Both teachers and parents can access this support for their child at school or at home. We can see if a child is ready for formal learning at 5, and the good news is we can help them if they aren't.

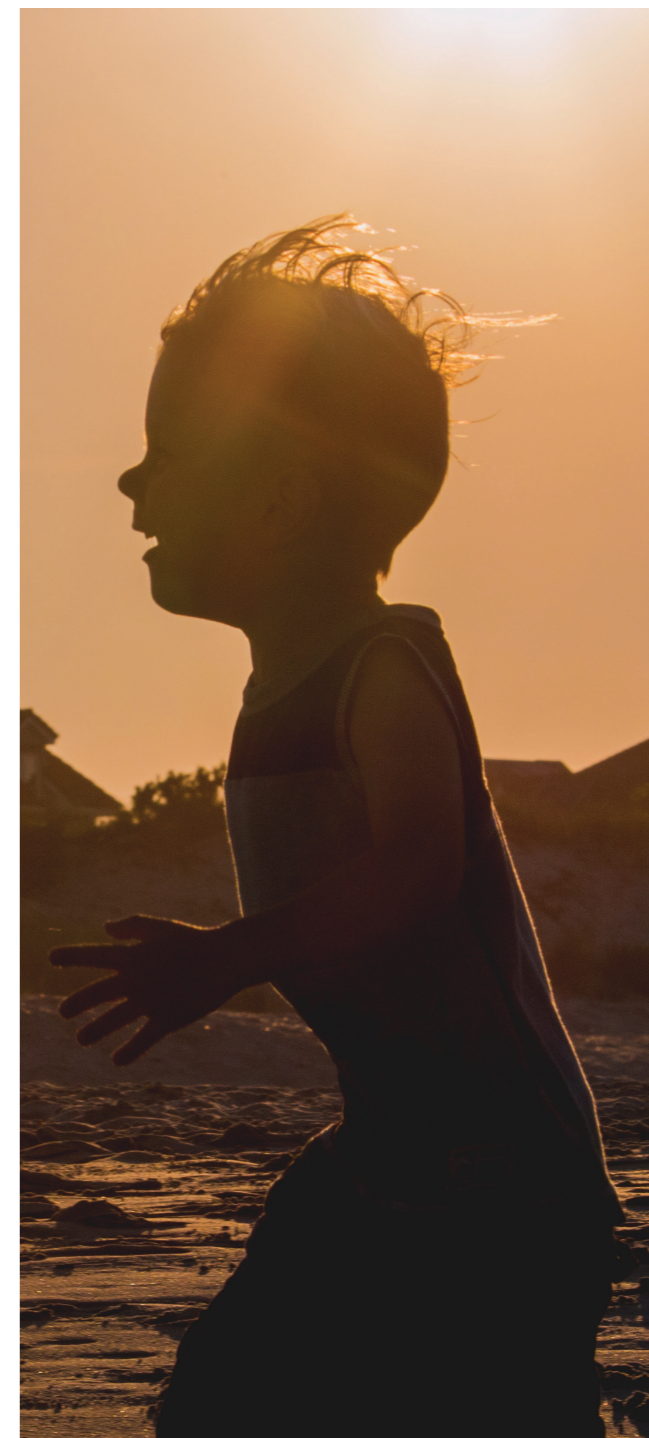
If you know a child who suffers from these symptoms there is help! Get your child ready for school by discovering if Primitive reflexes are an issue for your child. Or if you are a teacher, help all your children become physically ready for formal learning by registering your interest in the one-day teachers' course in assessing neuro-motor readiness for learning.

I'll see you there at www.withoutlimitslearning.co.nz



Leanne Seniloli is married with four children and is super committed to releasing every child's fullest potential. She is a qualified and registered New Zealand early childhood educator, and a Neuro-Developmental Therapist (INPP), and has also completed a Dip. Children's writing, bi-lateral Integration training, and a Dip. Leadership. She works with children and educators through Professional Development programmes, movement exercise programmes, and parent talks.

WITHOUT LIMITS LEARNING
Releasing children's fullest potential



Childhood is a journey, not a race.