

Why your child should have rhythmic skills

By Usha Patel, learning difficulties therapist.

Bal-A-Vis-X is an exercise programme to help learning. It stands for Balance, Auditory Vision, eXercise and is often used to support children with special educational needs, but it is suitable for everyone. It addresses all the fundamental skills required by a child before they start in the academic word of school. Bal-A-Vis-X is also very unique in providing a vital skill that is often not nurtured enough in schools and affects how well and fast children absorb information. This skill is 'rhythm'!

Rhythm is so important

To understand rhythm and its importance we have to start with the unborn baby. Rhythm begins in the womb when the baby is listening and feeling the rhythmic patterns of his/her mother's heartbeat, breathing and movement patterns. These rhythmic patterns provide the much needed motor-sensory patterning required later for nursing, crawling, walking, skipping and jumping. The imprint of patterning at this early stage in development is also linked to language acquisition. Without this implicit skill of rhythm, motor planning and co-ordination is poor.

Crawling is a great example of rhythmic movement. So is an adult 'galloping' down a long stair case. The agility, timing, and pace required to run down a set of stairs can be so fascinating to watch, and is as telling as being able to dance. It is this 'getting into pace' that allows automatic flow. And without automatic flow movement appears awkwardly disjointed and clumsy.

Rhythm helps with motor coordination

If you know an adult that can't dance you understand the saying you either 'have rhythm or you don't!' Rhythm can be taught by parents and/or professionals. The techniques used in Bal-A-Vis-X are all teachable and can be transferred



successfully from the parent/teacher to the child with ease. Using inexpensive materials of small bouncy balls, or small sand filled bags, the process of tossing/catching or bouncing/catching help embed a skill which are relatively impossible to learn if 'you don't have rhythm naturally.' You don't need to be an athlete to do this programme. Children start off by passing the sandbags (hand size) rhythmically in place of throwing or rolling a large ball rhythmically instead of bouncing. Incremental steps bridge the new learners gaps and slowly they start doing what may have been conceived as impossible before. The rhythmic skill learnt in Bal-a-vis-x is transferred to better football, swimming, writing, bike riding, dancing, playing the piano and many other things!

Rhythm helps struggling learners

Bal-A-Vis-X is used in the classroom by teachers TAs, Occupational therapists and parents with SEN children. It is a programme that encourages children to teach one another.

The movement and rhythmic patterns help embed/retain information, which would otherwise be random. Seeing children grasp concepts of sequencing is very satisfying especially as these exercises are perceived as fun. Children do not want to stop, it is pretty difficult to get them to put balls down when their time is up! With over 300 exercises to teach, there is a challenge for all levels of ability.

•Next training is in London April 4th, 5th and 6th. Bal-A-Vis-X is a schools-based programme, do talk to your school and see if a teacher could enrol. If you want to be empowered to help your child, then call 07766 837 616 or book online www.integratedbrain.co.uk

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