



## Body Awareness

Body awareness allows us to know where our bodies and limbs are in a defined space. It is related to our proprioceptive system (information from our muscles and joints) and vestibular system (information from the inner ear).



### Signs that someone may have difficulty with body awareness

- Difficulty maintaining acceptable personal distances from others or during conversation
- May appear clumsy and have difficulty with fine motor activities and coordination
- May use more or less force than is necessary during some activities
- Difficulty moving around in a cluttered environment
- Struggles when getting dressed
- Organization tasks can take extra time and effort, and often may be avoided

### Strategies that might help

- Provide opportunities to practice movement in safe and fun ways (see activities below)
- Use words and verbal cues to “talk through” difficult movements or activities
- Use visual cues to help with activities, such as looking in a mirror while washing hair or getting dressed
- Outline personal space using props (e.g., a mat to sit on during circle time at school) or examples (e.g., “Imagine a hula hoop around your body.”)
- Weight and pressure can provide extra information about our bodies and limbs. For example, sitting with weight on the lap can help bring awareness to our center of gravity, or having ankle weights on can help us know where our feet are in relation to our bodies. Consult with a therapist before using weight to assist with body awareness.

### Activities to help develop body awareness

These activities provide our joints with input in the form of pressure and weight. They allow our bodies to move through space in new ways so that we can learn from the experience.

- Wheelbarrow walking, crab walking or crawling during relay races and obstacle courses
- Jumping jacks, jumping rope, hopping, skipping, hopscotch
- Catching, throwing or lifting heavy balls or bean bags
- Finishing incomplete pictures of people
- Singing and performing action songs, such as “head and shoulders, knees and toes”
- Cutting pictures of people out of magazines
- Sitting on a therapy ball while completing desk work

Occupational therapy can help to identify if you or your child may be struggling with body awareness issues. Therapists will devise age-appropriate solutions to help improve body awareness, while boosting confidence and coordination at school and home.