

# What is Praxis?

Praxis or motor planning is the ability to conceive of, organize, and execute a novel or new task. It is a three-step process which includes ideation (“What can I do?” “What do I need to do?”); planning (“How do I do it?” “In what order [sequence] do I do it?”); and execution (the “doing the plan”).

For individuals with adequate motor planning, after the three-step process for an action is established, the task is no longer new and should not have to be relearned. They can generalize an ability from one setting to another; so, they can jump, gallop or skip in any location, not only where the skill was practiced. Praxis also allows a person to apply the principles of how the task is done from one object or material to another (e.g. tying shoes, tying a bow on a present, tying an apron behind your back).

Effective planning utilizes feedforward and feedback. Feedforward lets you anticipate the outcome of the action. Feedback is the input received during the action or after the action is completed. It lets you know if your plan is correct, or if your plan needs to be adjusted.

Individuals with motor planning issues have challenges acquiring and executing gross, fine, and oral motor skills. They often need more direct instruction, more repetition, and more hand over hand guidance to learn motor tasks than individuals who do not have this issue. They need to be provided with opportunities to generalize skills in a variety of settings and benefit from “just right challenges” which are motivating and achievable with moderate effort. People with dyspraxia can be rigid, have specific routines, and shy away from new experiences. They may also seem more tired than others, due to the effort they need to expend managing the unexpected occurrences of daily life.

Challenges with motor planning, called developmental dyspraxia, may occur in children and adults without any other motor or learning disorders. Currently, the medical diagnosis for this is Developmental Coordination Disorder.

## *A Checklist for Developmental Dyspraxia*

- Person finds learning new motor skills difficult.
- Person is challenged by motor activities involving more than one step.
- Person does not explore, preferring the same toys/materials, activities or locations, repeatedly.
- Person needs help with self-care skills, such as dressing and eating.
- Person is clumsy, awkward, and/or inefficient.
- Person finds team sports with many players in motion overwhelming.
- Person struggles or is slower when following verbal directions and/or imitating visual directions.
- Person has difficulty organizing materials or physical spaces (bedroom, locker, desk).

*If someone you know is experiencing three or more of these problems, occupational therapy intervention may be helpful.*



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