

Vol. 3. Issue 2

The Magnifying Glass – A Newsletter

April 2013

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Spring has sprung and we are ready for it! Be sure to check out the latest news and events below, like our May Awareness campaign, which is in full swing! Dexy's Corner gives an overview of visual motor integration and suggested activities. And we've also got information on upcoming events, fundraisers and conferences.

Happy spring!

What's New?

May has been proclaimed XY CHROMOSOMAL VARIATION AWARENESS MONTH in over 8 states. Help us spread the word by getting a proclamation in your state! See our quick guide (http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/docs/How_to_Request_a_Proclamation_2013.pdf) for steps on getting started, sample letters and proclamation examples to send to your state representative. Please feel free to contact us with questions if you need help in your state. Let's make 2013 a landmark year for awareness!

We've also got informational flyers and brochures on our website that can be passed out to friends, doctors, specialists, schools and anyone else who might benefit from the information. Be sure to check everything out on our webpage at www.thefocusfoundation.org

Upcoming Fundraisers, Conferences and Events:

San Francisco Casino Night, Saturday, June 29th: Join us at McCormick and Kuleto's Captain's Room to raise fun and funds for The Focus Foundation's important research and advocacy work. Tickets and information are available on our website at:
http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/Casino_Night.php

THE TENTH ANNUAL 49ers Conference, July 17-19, 2013 in Annapolis, MD. This year's conference will focus on common Orthopedic Conditions, behavior and oral and motor Dyspraxia. Register online at http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/07_2013_Conference.php

Save the date for the next Oktoberfest Celebration! October 17th in Philadelphia, PA. This years Oktoberfest celebration will take place at the Crystal Tea Room at the Wanamaker in Philadelphia. Stay tuned for details on another fabulous night of traditional German celebration and fundraising for the Focus Foundation!

Stay tuned for events in Chicago and Florida in the coming months!
Want to host a fundraiser in your city? Contact us on how to get started organizing your own soiree to raise fun and funds!

Dexy's Corner – Bringing it all together

Our last two newsletters focused on [visual perception](http://mad.ly/7b8a13?pact=329094970294682424&fe=1) (<http://mad.ly/7b8a13?pact=329094970294682424&fe=1>) and [sensory and movement](http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/docs/Magnifying_Glass_V2_I2.pdf) (http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/docs/Magnifying_Glass_V2_I2.pdf), the combination of utilizing those skills is visual motor coordination, an important and necessary skill for many daily activities.

Did you know? Visual motor coordination or HAND - EYE COORDINATION happens when our visual and sensory skills give us the ability to control our movement as we guide them by vision. Our **visual perception** allows us to see our environment and process this information to form images. At the same time our **sensory and movement-processing** abilities take incoming information from our senses and turn it into a behavioral motor response. These two components work together to create our **visual motor coordination**.

This coordination allows us to draw, write, solve puzzles, play catch, swing a bat, tie our shoes and complete many other day-to-day movements. Often problems with visual-motor coordination go unrecognized in children until they reach elementary school age. Early signs of visual-motor struggles may be seen if a child has difficulty drawing simple pictures, playing ball games, learning to write or seems to struggle with general drawing and writing tasks.



How you can help: Since visual-motor skills cover a wide-range of activities there are several ways to work on these skills with children of all ages. From practicing handwriting to playing games, the below exercises are just a few suggestions to cultivate stronger visual-motor coordination.

Drawing: For younger children, there are plenty of non-writing ways to enhance skills. A good way to get started is by getting your child to draw, and then trying out different strokes and shapes with them. Make it fun by using different writing utensils - crayons, markers, and colored pencils, even chalk!

Filling in the Picture: Work with your child to draw strokes in different directions and learn different shapes, try drawing vertical and diagonal lines to make a picture. For example, draw "train tracks" and have them fill in the cross rails or draw a car and have them fill in the tires. There is even print ready "Finish the Drawing" activities available online, check out Make Learning Fun's selection.

<http://www.makinglearningfun.com/themepages/CompleatetheDrawingPages.htm>

Tracing, Stencils and Mazes: Draw shapes with a thick highlighter and have your child trace the highlighted image with a marker or pencil. Use tracing paper to trace over shapes and images - start with simple shapes and move up to more involved pictures from illustrated books or comics. Use toothpicks, Popsicle sticks and other objects to form shapes and trace around them with colored pencils. Stencils are another great way to mimic tracing and create shapes. You can even make your own stencils by cutting shapes out of paper and using the frame of the shape to trace. Mazes are another fun activity, trace the path out with your finger first and then go back with a pencil or crayon and follow the path.

Getting off the page: Chalk, watercolor and other washable paints are great ways to do some of the above activities on a larger scale. Instead of tracing shapes, try tracing around each other's feet or hands in the driveway with sidewalk chalk. Lay out large sheets of paper and paint giant shapes and color them in with washable paint. You could even combine shapes to make simple drawings. For example, draw two vertical lines and a large green circle on top to make a tree, a square and a triangle to make a house, create a whole scene and use it as the backdrop for a play!

Take it to the next level and incorporate some sensory activity as well with PAINTING WITH SPAGHETTI, that's right noodles! Check out the PLAYFULLY LEARNING blog for directions on how to make the colored spaghetti - for visual-motor skills try forming shapes out of the noodles or connection noodles to "draw" shapes and forms.

<http://playfullylearning.blogspot.com/2010/06/painting-with-spaghetti-oh.html>



Credit: Dana Gorman, Playfully Learning <http://playfullylearning.blogspot.com/2010/06/painting-with-spaghetti-oh.html>

Other Helpful Activities: *If drawing isn't doing the trick, try some of these games to get them using their hands and eyes to complete the activity.*

Lacing, Beading and Stringing: *Lacing cards for younger children will get their hands moving in a way similar to tracing. Try simpler cards with patterns around the edges for more free form lacing, then move on to cards with shapes and figures. Eeboo has a great selection of themed lacing cards*

http://www.amazon.com/Eeboo-Life-Earth-Lacing-Cards/dp/B001QL2KJQ/ref=pd_sim_t_1
*Geoboards use rubber bands instead of laces to make shapes on a pegged board. Try simply mimicking shapes, or creating a design out of overlapping shapes. Math Playground provides a free online version of a geoboard as well. <http://www.mathplayground.com/geoboard.html>
Beading and stringing can be done with common household items as well. String beads, uncooked macaroni noodles, popcorn, fruit loops or cut-up straws onto rope or string. Try stringing a couple of different, repeated patterns.*

Active Games: *Playing catch and toss are excellent ways to stay active and work on coordinating larger motor activities. Medium and large balls are best to use with younger children, for older children try a smaller ball like a softball, baseball or tennis ball. Bouncy balls can also be used for a similar purpose. The action of bouncing and catching the ball requires similar coordination to catching a tossed ball. Beanbag toss games can be a great multiplayer way to activate skills. Try setting up your own targets by using large empty containers, you can make the game more challenging by using smaller containers.*

Helpful tips for writing and schoolwork: Graph paper can be useful when dealing with numbers and math equations. Line up the equations in boxes on the page so they are easier to follow. Sectioning or blocking off parts of a worksheet or workbook that you are not working on, use sheets of paper to cover up all of the problems except for the one you are working on at the moment. Using a vertical or slanted surface for writing and drawing can help improve head and wrist positioning. Try an easel, chalkboard, or even taping paper to the wall. Most importantly, work on different study and homework skills to fit their individual needs, if something isn't working try another way of getting it done.

Spring has sprung - fun games that also foster visual-motor coordination:

Beanbag Toss with Carry Bag:

<http://www.target.com/p/beanbag-toss-with-carry-bag/-/A-10260909>

Toss the beanbag into the targets on the board and score points. A great way to foster hand eye coordination and the carry bag makes this game easy to pick up and take anywhere.



Etch-a-sketch:

This classic game works hand and finger muscles and challenges right and left side awareness. This is a great way to put all the elements of visual motor coordination to work. And this tiny pocket version of the etch-a-sketch is small enough to go just about anywhere.

<http://www.landofnod.com/mini-etch-a-sketch/f4916?a=1081&device=c&network=g&matchtype=>



Amaze Mazes: This handheld game takes the challenge to the next level. Recommended for ages 8 and up this handheld game features movable obstacles so every maze changes as you play!

<http://www.amazon.com/Think-Fun-5820-ThinkFun-Amaze/dp/B00021H924>

Squiggly Worms: This is a great game for improving fine motor skills while also working on visual coordination. Not only does it teach coordination in using both sides of the hand, but also helps in retrieving movements, or the transferring of items from the palm of the hand to the fingers.

<http://www.amazon.com/Pressman-Toy-3004-06-Squiggly-Worms/dp/B00009934Q>



Sidewalk Chalk: This washable chalk allows them to write on just about anything outside without worrying about stains or marks. Try writing the sidewalk, driveway, walls or other surfaces to see what angles work best for child in drawing activities.

http://www.amazon.com/Crayola-3D-Giant-Chalk-Set/dp/B001P74WRY/ref=pd_sim_t_6

Catch and Toss: This is a great game for little ones who can get frustrated in a regular game of catch. The Velcro mitts makes catching the ball a little easier. This is fun game for the backyard or the beach!

<http://www.amazon.com/Velcro-Toss-Catch-Game-Mitts/dp/B007ZGR4BA>

Apps for Visual Motor Integration:

iMazing: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/imazing/id398036756?mt=8>

This app challenges youngsters with unlimited mazes of varying difficulty. Mazes will adapt to changing levels of interest and difficulty. This is a simple, straightforward app to keep young minds active and engaged.

Kids Connect the Dots Lite :

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=zok.android.dots&hl=en>

This free app is available for both Apple and Android and allows your child to practice numbers, letters, drawing, and image recognition. A more extensive version is available for a small price.

I Write Words Lite: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iwritewords-lite/id308152258?mt=8>

Another free app that lets students use natural gravity and fine motor skills to form letters properly. Upper and lower case letters are included and students can see their own writing. Ideal for children under 7, or those who thrive on repetition with great visuals.

Cut the buttons: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cut-the-buttons/id474138682?mt=8>

This is a great interactive game that occupational therapists, as well as parents, will love! Cut the buttons uses virtual scissors to cut buttons off of pieces of fabric. In order to do so, the user must use their thumb and index finger to open and close the scissors accordingly. And to kick it up a notch, there is a container at the bottom and the user is encouraged to catch the falling buttons into the container as well! And watch out for the screws, as it dulls the scissors and reduces your points!

Clever Kids: <http://www.kizzuapps.com/our-apps/mobile/learning/clever-kids-first-puzzles/>

First Puzzles Learning Game for Children, for those aged between 2 and 6. The app includes several “worlds” for players to explore including the Farm, the Ocean and Dinosaur world! Your child can learn new words, shapes and spelling. Puzzle pieces are dragged around the tablet screen to create a picture and fill in the animals that inhabit each scene. The app will also help your child spell out each word individually.

Help us spread the word even further this May!

Did you know that Klinefelter’s Syndrome affects 1 in 500 to 1,000 newborns? Many of these children, especially those with less noticeable symptoms, may go completely undiagnosed until adulthood. We at The Focus Foundation know how important an early diagnosis can be in the development of a child. We have seen firsthand the remarkable difference that early intervention can make. Help us spread the word to parents, educators and health care providers about early testing for Klinefelter’s so we can find and treat all those affected. A tax-deductible donation to The Focus Foundation supports our efforts to continue researching Klinefelter syndrome and possible treatments. Help us focus on research that will foster a change in the lives of children and families affected by this and related disorders. Consider giving to The Focus Foundation in support of XY Chromosomal Variation Awareness Month this May to support research, awareness and advocacy.

Donating online is easier than ever, just click on our page below. Your generosity will improve the lives of many individuals!

http://www.thefocusfoundation.org/FF/supporting_the_foundation.php