
Three Children Get “In Sync”

Carol Kranowitz, MA; and Joye Newman, MA

Reprinted from Growing an In-Sync Child by Carol Kranowitz and Joye Newman, by arrangement with Perigee, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., Copyright (c) 2010 by Out-of-Sync Child Inc. and Joye Newman.

ABSTRACT

With a strong foundation of smoothly functioning sensory, perceptual-motor, and visual systems, young children are likely to succeed at home, at school, and out and about. Lacking these three components, which Carol Kranowitz and Joye Newman consider necessary building blocks for being “In-Sync,” children may falter and fall behind their peers. By observing children’s sensory processing, affect, posture, motor coordination, and other behaviors on the playground and in the classroom, teachers and therapists can take note of their developmental skills and can introduce fun and purposeful “In-Sync” activities into the school day that will give young students a head start and a leg up.

Imagine what it is like for children who are expected to do more than their bodies are ready to do. Any one of the In-Sync components that is immature or lacking can significantly compromise a child’s ability to succeed in the world. (“In-Sync” components are the three interrelated sensory, perceptual-motor, and visual systems, described in *Growing an In-Sync Child: Simple, Fun Activities to Help Every Child Develop, Learn and Grow*—Perigee, 2010.)

We recall three children whose difficulties illustrate the importance of building a strong foundation. These children required early intervention. Of course, most children develop just fine, especially when movement is incorporated in everything they do.

FROM SHRINKING VIOLET TO BLOSSOMING ROSE

Rosie comes to Kids Moving Company when she has just turned six. She gives the impression of being small because of the way she holds herself, contracting inward. On the playground, she shrinks from group play. Her movements are tentative. Her voice is very soft.

At the dinner table, Rosie props up her head with her hand. At school, she rests her head on her desk. Both at home and at school, she is very cooperative, but her teachers sometimes wish she would be more assertive.

Rosie’s pediatrician suggests that she may need psychotherapy, as her self-esteem appears to be very low. Because Rosie’s parents jog and play tennis regularly, they are aware of the role that movement plays in feeling good. Before following through on

the pediatrician’s suggestion, they decide to offer their daughter a moving experience with Joye Newman, a perceptual motor therapist.

At their first meeting, Joye offers Rosie several movement challenges, including moving through an obstacle course, jumping across the room, and catching and bouncing a ball. She notices that Rosie is fatiguing rapidly, and they move to the table, where Joye shows Rosie the first five of the following shapes, one at a time.



The above shapes are from Visual Achievement Forms, used with The Purdue Perceptual-Motor Survey (1966), by Newell C. Kephart and Eugene G. Roach. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Books.

As she shows each shape, she asks Rosie to copy it on a sheet of paper. Here is what Rosie’s paper looks like:

Notice how Rosie draws all the shapes in miniature and crams

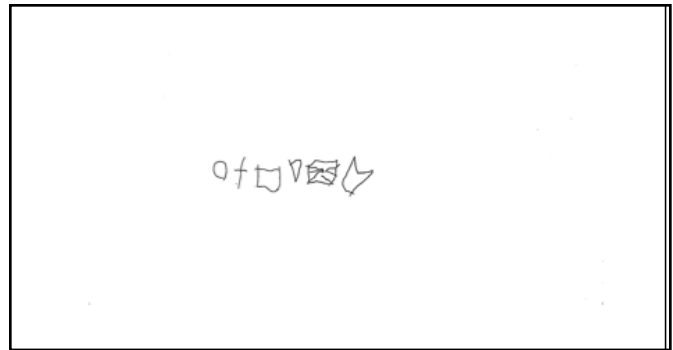


Figure 1. Rosie’s first attempt to copy shapes prior to movement intervention.

them all into the center of her paper. This tells us, above all, that Rosie does not have good spatial awareness, which is the understanding of space and where one is in relation to the surrounding world. Rosie’s placement of the shapes in relation to the paper could be a reflection of the way she perceives herself in relation to the environment around her.

Because spatial awareness develops as the child rolls, crawls, creeps, toddles, and eventually runs through the world, logically the way to promote spatial skills is by rolling, crawling, creeping, toddling, and running. These movement activities will also address Rosie’s underlying difficulties with proprioceptive and vestibular processing, suggested by her poor posture. Sitting at a table with a pencil or in front of a computer with a mouse will do her no good.

Joye could choose to have Rosie repeatedly practice drawing the shapes, even directing her where to place them on the paper. After many practice sessions, Rosie's paper would probably look perfect—but this tedious repetition of a single task would not solve the underlying problem.

Instead, Joye and Rosie play movement games that encourage Rosie to move her whole body through space. The goal of the therapy is to expand her world. Over the next few months, Rosie does In-Sync activities, such as Arm Circles, Balloon Buffoon, and Rolling Log. As her sensory processing improves, she is better able to move her body and thus to understand where she is in space.

After a few months of playful work together, Joye reintroduces

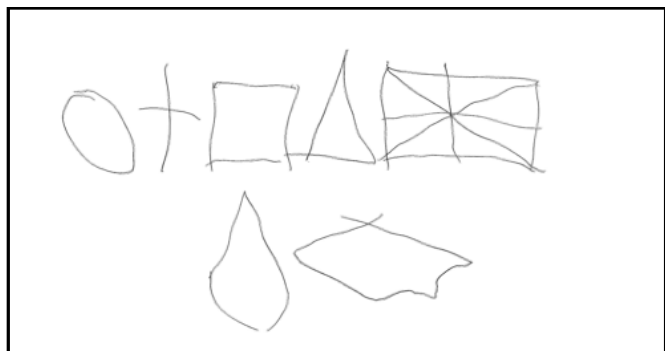


Figure 2. Rosie's shapes following a few months of In-Sync activities.

the shapes and asks Rosie to copy them. This is how her second paper looks:

As you can see, Rosie's second paper shows a much better organization of space. The vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines in her divided rectangle intersect accurately, indicating a maturing grasp of spatial relationships. And, because her therapy was movement-based, her newfound sense of organization is also obvious in the way Rosie holds herself, her exuberant participation on the playground, and her comfort mingling with her peers.

FROM BULLY TO BUDDY

Bernie's sixth-grade teacher has concerns about his aggressive behavior, poor math grades, and difficulty with reading and writing. Bernie has worked with a tutor twice a week for the past month, but his teacher and worried parents have seen no improvement. His parents bring him to Kids Moving Company at his pediatrician's suggestion.

Joye learns from his parents that Bernie never moved on all fours and was an early walker. He never sits still. He is, in their words, "all over the place." His bedroom is a disaster area, as are his binder, locker, and desk.

Bernie does not excel at soccer, even though his parents describe his gross motor skills as "excellent." He is rarely chosen for a team because he seems not to follow the rules.

During his first visit, Joye watches Bernie attempt various motor tasks and sees that although he succeeds, it is with great difficulty. Joye notices how hard he must concentrate on tasks that should be simple, such as marching in a pattern. She notices his clenched fists when he jumps on two feet or skips. This tells us that Bernie struggles mightily to move his body effectively. When that's the case, how can a boy be comfortable in his body—and in the big world?

More evidence of Bernie's internal disorganization is his



Figure 3. Bernie's first attempt to copy shapes prior to movement intervention.

representation of the same shapes that Rosie copied. Here is Bernie's paper. (Please note that the small rectangle with intersecting lines at the lower left is Joye's sample, not Bernie's work.)

Notice how Bernie draws his shapes on top of one another. He shows no organization in his work. Like Rosie's paper, Bernie's paper shows us that he, too, has poor spatial awareness. This is not surprising, as he never creeps, and because he never creeps, his laterality and his mid-line crossing are also likely to be poorly developed.

Whereas a goal of Rosie's program is to open her up, a goal of Bernie's program is to rein him in. In his case, as in hers, working at a desk is not going to be helpful. Bernie needs to move through the early developmental steps that he missed. He begins on the ground with In-Sync activities such as Nose to Knee, Roll-a-Path, and Scootie Cutie. These activities will give Bernie the fundamental skills he missed by walking before he was really ready. Once the foundation is sturdy, Bernie will use his body more effectively and efficiently as he moves purposefully through space.

Look at Bernie's second paper after four months of In-Sync activities.

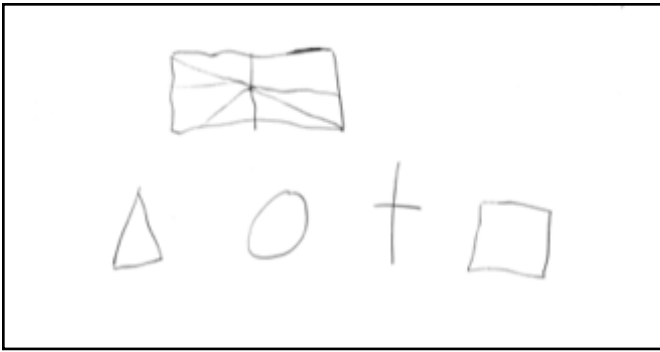


Figure 4. Bernie's shapes following 4 months of In-Sync activities.

Notice how he has drawn his shapes in an organized fashion. Now, he is beginning to understand math skills because he is beginning to internalize concepts of left and right (laterality and mid-line crossing) and up and down (directionality).

Furthermore, through the activities that encouraged Bernie to use his body in new ways, his motor planning shows dramatic improvement. He now easily finds his homework in his binder, his long-lost sneakers under his bed, and himself in the middle of a winning team.

FROM CLUELESS TO COMPETENT

George, a member of the Teddy Bear class at St. Columba's Nursery School, is about to turn four, but his behavior is that of a younger child. In social interactions, where his peers "use their words," George uses his hands. At the table, while his classmates are constructing towers and houses with Legos, George purposelessly gathers and scatters the blocks. Walking down the hall, George drags his hand along the wall.

On the playground, he sits in one spot in the sandbox or leans against the teacher's leg. He refuses to get on the swing or the slide.

He takes a slapdash approach to art. At the easel, he smears a horizon line across the paper without even looking at what his paintbrush is doing. Back at the table, he rushes through art projects with a minimum of interest.

George's teachers are confused because he is a sweet boy who frequently ends up in a tussle with his classmates. His parents are concerned because no one wants to play with him.

Despite "normal" results from routine visual and sensory processing screenings, George's teachers are still concerned. They share their observations with Carol, who has been teaching and consulting at St. Columba's for many years. She agrees that something is going on and knows that the screenings were just screenings and therefore too cursory to detect George's difficulty.

Carol suggests that some of his behaviors can be explained by poor visual processing. If George's visual system is not operating optimally, he may not understand where he is in space or how near or far he is to an object. Without consistent visual information to rely on, George may need to use his hands to "see," to balance, and to move. Without physical contact to act as his eyes, he may be just plain scared.

The optimum therapy for George would be vision training (VT), but before suggesting that, Carol and Joye design a program of In-Sync activities for the teachers to integrate into their classroom and for George's parents to implement at home. The activities include Angel Wings, Eye Spy, and Follow the Feather. Carol and Joye choose these activities in order to help George develop and enhance his visual processing, including binocularity for depth perception and tracking. Because an efficient visual system depends on an In-Sync body, these activities also address bilateral coordination and motor planning.

Fortunately, George's teachers understand that these activities benefit all the children in the Teddy Bear class, and so they incorporate one or more activities into the daily schedule. At home, George's parents embrace the program and are pleasantly surprised to see how quickly the activities become second nature. George also begins VT with a developmental optometrist, and the smooth collaboration of teachers, parents, and therapist is hugely successful.

Before long, George becomes an active participant on the playground, in the classroom, and at home. He takes pride in his Lego constructions and art projects. He begins to request playdates and becomes much more competent and independent.

Although Rosie, Bernie, and George are different ages and appear to have different needs, they all benefit greatly from the In-Sync activities. The reason is that the In-Sync activities provide the movement experiences all children require to build a sturdy foundation. For various reasons, these children were not comfortable using their bodies to move and therefore lost opportunities to grow optimally in their physical, social, and emotional development.

These kids are among the many we have treated or taught since our careers began in the 1970s. Their difficulties are representative of a myriad of behaviors that are often misunderstood, overlooked, misdiagnosed, or improperly treated. It is a daunting task for a parent or teacher to understand a child's behavior, recognize when it is a problem that requires professional intervention, and come up with "over-the-counter" activities for home and school. The easy "In-Sync" program can help all schoolchildren develop skills as teachers learn to incorporate the concepts into their classroom routine.

For more information about In-Sync Activities, contact Carol Kranowitz or Joye Newman through www.in-sync-child.com

ARM CIRCLES



Here's a perfect quickie activity to use as a movement break at school or home. It is easy, feels good, and is therapeutic for the body and brain. A few minutes of Arm Circles will give your child a chance to breathe deeply and stretch widely, to "get the kinks out," and then to settle down and focus on homework. Try it—it works like magic.

Helps Your Child Develop and Enhance . . .

- Bilateral coordination (for holding and passing a beach ball)
- Motor planning (for moving and writing easily)
- Proprioception (for lifting the laundry basket and carrying it upstairs)

What You Need

- No equipment

What You Do

1. Have Malia stand in a space where she can extend her arms easily. Say, "Extend your arm to the sides and rotate them in small circles, ten times."
2. Say, "Now reverse direction, and rotate your arms ten times."

Ways to Make It More Challenging

- Have Malia make Arm Circles above her head.
- Have Malia make Arm Circles in front of her body.

What to Look For

- Malia's arms stay extended throughout the activity.
- She simultaneously moves both arms.
- She is consistent in the size and direction of her Arm Circles.
- She switches direction accurately.

(From *Growing an In-Sync Child*, pp. 97-98.)

Carol Kranowitz, an early education teacher, wrote *The Out-of-Sync Child*, *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun*, *Preschool Sensory Scan for Educators*, and other books about *Sensory Processing Disorder*. **Joye Newman**, a perceptual-motor therapist, is the founder and director of *Kids Moving Company*. Together, they wrote *Growing an In-Sync Child* and the new *In-Sync Activity Cards*. For more, visit www.in-sync-child.com. Carol Kranowitz will be a featured speaker at AET's 34th Annual Conference in Arlington, Virginia on October 19, 2012.

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HEAD of SCHOOL

July 1, 2013

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