

The Left and Right Brain

Our brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres, commonly known as the left and right brain. Within each half, particular regions manage certain functions.

In 1960, Nobel prize psychobiologist Roger W. Sperry suggested the differences between the two brains.

The left brain is into

- logic
- sequencing
- linear thinking
- mathematics
- facts
- thinking in words

The right brain leans toward

- imagination
- holistic thinking
- intuition
- arts
- rhythm
- nonverbal cues
- feelings
- visualization

In 2013, researchers done by a team of neuroscientists indicated that the human brain doesn't favor one side over the other. That means we do not have a dominant brain just as we have a dominant hand. Bundles of nerve fibers tie the two hemispheres together, creating an information highway. The two sides of our brain work together and complement each other, allowing it to function as a whole.

Whole brain instruction teaches children to use the two sides of the brain. This process is called integration.

Activities that integrate the 2 sides of the brain.

Physical activities / exercises

Crossing the midline:

The midline is an imaginary line in the middle of a human body that separates the right and left sides.

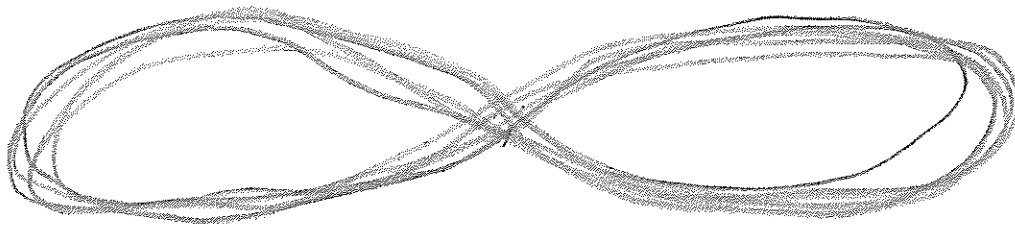
Any physical movement with arms and legs that cross the midline is encouraged for our young, developing minds.

When we do that both hemispheres are activated and bilateral coordination is developed.

- Lift the right knee and touch it with the left elbow. Reverse with the opposite elbow and knee. (Repeat as many times as possible)
Another version is to slap the bottom of the foot with the opposite hand. (If you are barefoot).
An added bonus: If you slap the tip of the toes, you stimulate your head. If you slap the ball of your foot, you stimulate your heart and chest. (Chinese reflexology)
- Stand with feet apart (in comfortable distance).

Bend over and touch your right foot with the left hand.
Switch side. You can count to 4 on each side. (Repeat as many times as preferred)
Then count 2 on each side.
Then one. With one count, try to swing to the opposite side.
The bonus here is to stretch and strengthen the back, especially when your children / students have been in a sitting position for an extended period.
If this is done with straight legs, the leg muscles are strengthened.

- Walk side way in grapevine steps. i.e. crossing each leg front and back. Do it from left to right, and from right to left. (Repeat as much as possible).
- In a classroom situation, or seat / desk area, students can draw "Infinity" or side-way figure 8. Use paper and pencil, put a dot in the middle and draw the figure repeatedly.



This can also be done in air with an imaginary dot or on a sand box etc.

Doing this helps children focus and relax (especially before a test or an art project.)

- If children have been writing for an extended period, the pinky / thumb switch is a good change of pace to redirect or regain attention span. Have students make 2 fists. First slowly one finger at a time and work up to switching the pinky and thumb in unison. Right pinky, left thumb, and switch.

There are many exercises and fun activities that help children crossing the midline. Encourage our children / students to create their own!