



Parenting Potentials

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"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not join their chaos."

-L.R. Knost-

~ Shoshana Newman, Director, Pediatric Potentials

Decline in Fine Motor Skills

According to the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* elementary aged students spend between 37.1-60.2% of the school day performing fine motor activities. Handwriting accounts for only 3.4-18% of the day.

So what are fine motor skills and why do they matter? Fine motor skills work the small muscles of the hands, fingers, and wrists. Underdeveloped fine motor skills can have a long term impact on a child.



These activities contribute to the struggle kids are having with fine motor skills:

- skipping crawling
- time spent in car seats & strollers
- time spent in small spaces
- less free play and more scheduled activities
- decreased exposure to manipulatives and open ended play
- less movement based activities
- more screen time

These activities can help promote fine motor skills:

- limit screen time
- engage your child in household chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry

- play with play-doh
- throw a ball
- foster independence by teaching them dressing skills

With the right guidance, children can not only develop fine motor skills but also a sense of confidence and independence.

As always consult an OT if you have any questions or concerns. Pediatric Potentials even has a few Saturday morning openings for fine motor therapy sessions.



Why We Love Balance Bikes



Balance bikes, which are also called push bikes, are pedal-less bicycles typically designed for young children. Generally, a child around 2 years of age, or who is walking steadily for 6 months can begin to use one.

The top 5 reasons kids love balance bikes:

1. Fit younger kids because the seat height can be 10 inches off the ground.
2. They promote confidence and independence because the child's feet are on the ground.
3. Uneven surfaces are a breeze on a balance bike compared to a two wheel bike with training wheels.
4. They are lightweight and easy to ride, kids can go

If you don't have a balance bike and already have a height appropriate 2 wheel bicycle, you can try removing the pedals.

The benefits of balance bikes:

1. Help promote gross motor skills, build confidence, and provide an easier transition to a pedal bike than a bicycle with training wheels.
2. A whole body work out that develops core strength, leg, arm & grip strength as well as increases endurance.
3. Children can use as early as age 2.
4. They are better on uneven surfaces, and kids can more easily graduate to a pedal bike.

*And let's not forget to mention hours of outdoor fun!



further and improve endurance.

5. They are a total body workout for your little one.

Activities to Encourage Jumping

The skill of jumping promotes muscle strength, bone



strength, motor skills, balance and it is fun too. In general, children who are walking, climbing and beginning to run are ready to jump.

Children typically begin jumping between 16-18 months and will begin by trying to jump in place. There are many ways to support your child's jumping skills.

1. Bouncing: around 18 months use a small indoor trampoline, couch cushion or large pillows.
2. Assisted jumping: put your hands under your child's armpits (never by the hands), verbally cue them to bend their knees then count 1,2,3 JUMP!!! and lift them up as if they just jumped so high.
3. Jumping off a small elevation: put down a small book or other tiny elevation, let your child stand on the elevation and cue them to bend their knees and assist them in jumping down.

4. Jumping to targets: put down colored circles, paper, foam mats or another visual cue and assist your child to bend their knees and help them jump from one to another.

Check with your pediatrician or consult a physical therapist if your child is nearly 3 years old and has no other motor deficits and:

- isn't jumping
- can't push off from the ground
- only pushes with one side
- demonstrates extreme fear when feet are off the ground



Benefits of Bubbles

Everyday Early Intervention: Bubbles

Warm weather means it is a great time to explore the outdoors. Outside play is a wonderful opportunity to work on early intervention (EI) outcomes. For example, consider the fun warm weather pastime of blowing bubbles. Infants and toddlers love to see bubbles magically fly from a bubble wand. Did you know that when you are blowing bubbles you are working on many skills, including:



Oral motor skills: Blowing bubbles develops the small muscles in your child's mouth as they pucker their lips and blow bubbles. Strengthening these muscles is important for developing their ability to form clear sounds when speaking and to eat and swallow safely.

Gross motor skills: Children can reach to pop bubbles and build hand-eye coordination as they reach. Walking toddlers and infants may follow the bubbles on their feet and practice their moving skills.

Eye tracking skills: Younger infants and toddlers learn to follow the bubbles with their eyes.



Vocabulary and concept development: As you talk to your children about bubbles, you expose them to words such as *clear, soapy, float, and pop*.

Cognitive development: When young children touch a bubble, it pops, giving them a chance to explore cognitive concepts such as cause and effect.

Joint attention: Smiling and laughing together builds strong relationships and helps children learn to connect with others and discover shared interests. Who can help but smile as bubbles float by?

For more information, visit the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at <https://eiclearinghouse.org>

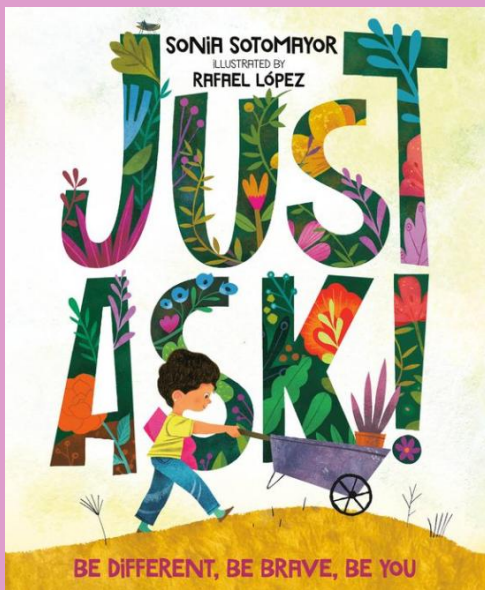
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Just Ask! by Justice Sonia Sotomayer

A kind and caring book about the differences that make each of us unique.

Feeling different, especially as a kid, can be tough. But in the same way that different types of plants and flowers make a garden more beautiful and enjoyable, different types of people make our world more vibrant and

Fruity Ladybug Bites

Ingredients:

- Watermelon
- Blueberries
- Blackberries

Assemble:

- scoop out watermelon balls
- attach 1/2 blueberry as the head, using toothpick if desired
- make small slits in the watermelon for blackberry segments

