



Do You Know A Child Who Is Clumsy?

A flyer for community group leaders and instructors

Do you know children who may feel “out of place” with children their age? They may not be able to do simple tasks that children around them can do such as cutting and pasting during craft activities or kicking or catching a ball during a motor game. Children with these types of difficulties may have *Developmental Coordination Disorder* (DCD). Even though many people have never heard of it, DCD affects about 5% of schoolaged children in North America. Children with DCD are also more likely to have other learning and/or attentional difficulties that can interfere with their ability to perform in group settings.

Children with DCD may have difficulty paying attention to or following through on instructions. They seem to work slowly at tasks and are often unable to keep up with their friends. They have trouble learning to coordinate their movements and may appear to be awkward or clumsy. Children with movement difficulties can become frustrated performing daily activities that other children of the same age perform with little effort. For these children, participation in physical games and creative hands-on activities requires great concentration and effort.

Repeated failure experiences cause children with DCD to withdraw from activities they cannot do well. When they avoid participating with others, they miss out on opportunities to socialize and develop friendships through group activities. Over time, they can develop poor self-confidence, become less motivated to try things that are hard and may become socially isolated. You can help children with DCD by modifying or adapting creative activities and physical activities so they can participate as much as possible in group settings. This participation is critical for the development of their self-worth and their ability to develop positive relationships with others.

What might you see in a child with movement difficulties?

- Appears clumsy or uncoordinated
- Has difficulty with ball skills (catching, throwing) and activities requiring good balance (running, jumping, climbing stairs)
- Has difficulty tying shoelaces, doing up buttons and zippers
- Avoids or has difficulty with printing, colouring, drawing and craft activities (cutting, pasting)
 - Works hard but is often unsuccessful; can become frustrated
 - Rushes through tasks, or, is unusually slow
 - May be disruptive; often can't sit still
 - May have poor self-esteem
 - Avoids socializing with peers, especially in physical games

How can you help a child with movement difficulties?

- Reduce the motor part of tasks (pre-cut/paste pieces for crafts, pair with another child to paste/cut)
- Ensure child is seated supportively during table activities
- During physical activities, reward participation and effort; emphasize fun, fitness and skill building
 - Modify equipment for safety (use Nerf balls, bean bags)
- Use markers for printing, colouring, drawing – focus on enjoyment, not the final product
- Allow child to change positions/move frequently
- Use verbal/visual instructions to demonstrate activities and games
- Be consistent with routines, explain new games before beginning
- Encourage child to take on a different, but important, role in some activities (e.g. referee, scorekeeper, time keeper)
- Recognize strengths and reinforce social interaction

For more information, please go to www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/canchild.



Download our free booklet called, “*Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder: At home and in the classroom.*” To order a hard copy of this booklet, or for more information, please call (905) 525-9140, ext. 27850