



# **Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)**

## **Post-Diagnosis Information Booklet**

## **What is DCD?**

Developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is a condition that affects physical coordination. It causes a child to find daily activities more difficult.

Children can appear to move more slowly and/or clumsily than their peers. They are less accurate when carrying out activities that involve motor skills, such as catching a ball, handwriting or using scissors.

DCD was previously known as dyspraxia, and often people still refer to it as this.

## **What causes DCD?**

Carrying out co-ordinated movements is a complex process that involves many different nerves and parts of the brain.

Any problem in this process could potentially lead to difficulties with movement and coordination.

It's not usually clear why coordination doesn't develop as well as other abilities in children with DCD.

Coordination difficulties are more often seen in very prematurely born babies.

## **Can you have DCD and another condition?**

Yes. People with DCD may have other conditions such as autism or ADHD.

## **Is there a cure for DCD?**

At present, there is no cure for DCD, but given the right help and support, an individual with DCD can lead a life to reach their full potential.

## **Common Characteristics**

DCD looks different in every person, below are a range of the behaviours that you might see in children and young people.

### *Pre-school*

- Difficulty with construction toys, such as Duplo or jigsaws.
- Difficulties on a balance bike, tricycle or scooter.
- Difficulty with fine motor skills during play, such as posting coins in a piggy bank or threading beads onto a string.
- Struggles to sit on a chair at a table to do play activities.
- Struggles with ball skills, such as throwing and catching.

### *Primary school age*

- Difficulties in P.E. and other physical activities, such as going up and down stairs.
- Messy handwriting and difficulty following the 'rules' of handwriting, like writing on the line or spacing out work.
- Messy when eating, spills food or struggles with cutlery.
- Have difficulty with friendships as a lot of playground games use coordination skills, e.g. football or skipping.
- Difficulties with dressing, including buttons and shoelaces. May look untidy or have clothes on the wrong way round.

### *Secondary school age*

- Refusing to go to school, or reluctant to go on certain days. This may be on days with P.E. or more handwriting.
- Difficulties with completing work on time.
- Poor or slow handwriting. Some young people may refuse to write at all as they know they struggle with this.
- Difficulties organising their belongings, often losing things or carrying everything with them "just in case".
- Difficulties with working memory and other aspects of executive functioning.

## What can help someone with DCD?

The main way to help is by taking a problem solving approach to the activity that a child or young person wants to get better at.

Goal: What I want to achieve?

Do you need to break this down into smaller steps?

Plan: How am I going to get there?

This is a step-by-step account. A bit like a 'recipe' of the activity, as you would follow in a recipe book.

Allow the child to come up with this in *their own words*. This is really important!

Allow mistakes/gaps in the plan so that the young person has chance to learn.

Do: Carry out the activity.

Check: Did I achieve my goal?

If so – great!

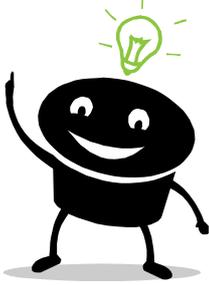
If not – did you follow the plan exactly? If so, what do you need to change about the plan?

You can photocopy the next page and work through this with your child. Make sure you focus on activities that are important to them.

### Top Tips

- Allow lots of time for talking and thinking (this is more important than the doing)
- Ask questions, don't correct
- Give them options to try and ask them to see which is best
- If they are struggling, make the difference between your options really obvious

**ACTIVITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>GOAL</b></p> 	<p><b>What do I want to do?</b></p> <p><b>Do I need smaller steps to reach my big goal?</b></p>
<p><b>PLAN</b></p> 	<p><b>How am I going to do it?</b></p>
<p><b>DO</b></p> 	<p><b>Carry out my plan.</b></p>
<p><b>CHECK</b></p> 	<p><b>Did it work?</b></p> <p><b>What do I need to do to change anything next time?</b></p>

## **M.A.T.C.H. Strategy**

*Modify the task* – change an aspect of the task to make it so that the child can still complete activity and feel success.

- Use loose fitting clothing with no fastenings to practice dressing.

*Alter your expectations* – Remember that the child will be working much harder than their peers. Think about what the overall goal of the activity and what you can be flexible about.

- If the focus is on spelling or story creation, work on this without handwriting. This could be using magnetic letters or using a scribe.

*Teach strategies* – children with DCD have the ability to learn but might need a different approach and extra time focusing on the plan.

- Make sure the child is involved with this; see the previous pages for one idea on how to do this.

*Change the environment* – pay attention to what else is going on around the child, e.g. level of noise, distracting movements.

- Try a ‘concentrating corner’ that can be set up with minimal distractions and reduced visual clutter.

*Help by understanding* – the more you know about DCD and the impacts of it, the more a child will feel supported and understood. This means they’ll be more likely to try new things and persevere.

- Check out the following few pages for more information and links.

## **Exercise**

Regular exercise is beneficial for all children with DCD. Most people with DCD enjoy non-competitive activities that focus on individual challenges, rather than team sports. This includes activities such as cycling, swimming or exploring the outdoors.

## **Advice & Support**

### **Support for Learning**

Every school has a support for learning link. If your child is having any difficulties that the teacher cannot manage, they are the key person to speak to as part of a staged approach.

### **Occupational Therapy (OT)**

OT focuses on helping young people to be able to carry out activities that are important to them.

An occupational therapist can help to work through the strategies outlined in this booklet and use further cognitive based techniques to help.

### **Can Child**

Can Child is a non-profit research and educational centre based in Canada. They are dedicated to generating knowledge and transforming the lives of children and young with developmental conditions.

There are a lot of resources available on their website.

One of the main ones is an **online workshop**, available at:

[http://elearning.canchild.ca/dcd\\_workshop/index.html](http://elearning.canchild.ca/dcd_workshop/index.html)

Others include:

- A booklet for parents and school staff
- Advice around handwriting verses typing
- Further advice on the M.A.T.C.H. strategy
- Life experiences of adolescents

All available from:

<https://canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder>

## **Further information & resources**

There are different organisations, websites and books that provide information about DCD. Below are some to get you started. They are all from well respected organisations but we cannot take responsibility for their content.

### ***NHS***

The National Health Service's website has further information on DCD.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia/>

### ***Dyspraxia Foundation***

Is a UK based charity that offers support, resources and an online shop.

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

8 West Alley, Hitchin, Herts, SE5 1EG

Telephone: 01462 454986

E-mail: [dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](mailto:dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

### ***Movement Matters***

Movement Matters is an umbrella group to bring together the key bodies involved in DCD in the UK.

<http://www.movementmattersuk.org/default.aspx>

### ***CHIP+***

CHIP (Children in the Highlands Information Point) offers information, support and advice to the families and carers of children and young people with additional support needs, and to professionals who work with them.

Birnie Child Development Unit, Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, IV2 3UJ

Telephone: 01463 711189

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