



Chrissy Thirlaway is an artist and qualified art teacher with experience in primary, secondary and adult education in art and visual perception. She is trained to deliver the INPP Schools Exercise Programme (see panel below). She explains how she became involved: "I was thrown into awareness of learning difficulties when my 15-year-old daughter asked me, on the eve of her English GCSE, 'what's a sentence?'. She was a very bright child who had been struggling to adjust to the British school system after her primary education abroad in a second language and until then I had no idea her "quirks" were symptoms of dyslexia.

"We stayed up with the Usborne Book of English Grammar and she passed her GCSE. She eventually managed to get support and recognition for her dyslexia at university and has blossomed and achieved high academic success.

"My son taught himself to read from bedtime story reading at the age of two. He is gifted across the board – except for sport. At school he was always getting into trouble for being disruptive and uncooperative and I was at a loss to know why my lovely, gentle,

willing son turned into a monster at school. Educational psychologists suggested he was bored and understimulated; no mention was made of dyspraxia or any other learning problem. It was at the point of his exclusion from school that I saw a programme on the television about dyspraxia and I recognized my son's coordination and behaviour patterns – it was such a relief.

"Through the programme I contacted the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology and my son was diagnosed as severely dyspraxic. He undertook three years of exercise treatment and his life has transformed. Though there are still residual shadows of dyspraxia, he can write, swim, ride a bicycle, sit still – all things he could not do aged 12. He is a happy, well adjusted young man.

"I now teach adults visual processing and work with children and adults with learning and coordination difficulties to identify retained neonatal reflexes. I deliver the INPP Schools Exercise Programme, a year long daily exercise programme for primary and secondary children designed to mature the neuron networks in reflex inhibited children."

The Rooting reflex is activated by stroking the cheek causing the baby's head to turn to that side and open its mouth to feed. The response only occurs when the baby is hungry. Retention can cause hypersensitivity around the mouth, problems with speech articulation, chewing and swallowing.

The Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex is stimulated by the turn of the baby's head which causes the limbs on that side extend and on the other curl in. This helps the baby down the birth canal and is strengthened during the birth process. Forceps and caesarean section can affect the development of this reflex.

After birth ATNR ensures an open airway for breathing and develops eye-hand coordination. Retention inhibits the development of crawling and later can affect balance, handwriting, sports skills, independent leg and arm movements, visual-perception.

Spinal Galant is also involved in the birth process. The sensitive area is either side of the spine between the pelvis and the neck. When stimulated the hips rotate, knees and arms bend and the head raises, helping the baby down the birth canal. It is also thought to be involved in the development of crawling. Retention is associated with fidgeting – especially when sitting, bedwetting, uneven gait and poor concentration and short term memory. It is present in a high

percentage of Asperger's sufferers.

The Tonic Labyrinthine reflex is linked to the Moro reflex. It reacts to movement of the head forwards and backwards. Retention symptoms include: poor posture, balance, coordination, organization, sense of time, motion sickness, dislike of sports, stiff gait, visual-perceptual difficulties.

While there is no easy single answer to all learning difficulties, retained neonatal reflexes are a major contributing factor. The correlation between learning difficulties and retained neonatal reflexes is extremely high. Babies and children learn through imitating and conforming and a child with retained neo-natal reflexes expends huge amounts of concentration and energy trying to control the effects of immature reflex patterns – no wonder they have difficulty learning. As soon as their concentration on reflex control is lost their behaviour becomes 'unacceptable'. Children are acutely aware of their comparative position in relation to their peers and the cycle of underachievement and low self esteem is established very early.

While strategies to ameliorate the symptoms of dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD are valuable, treatments to complete inhibition of neonatal reflexes have been effective in 80 per cent of children, as our panel, right, on the work of the INPP reveals...

## Helping children find their place

I work with The Institute for Neuro Physiological Psychology (INPP) which is a research and clinical organisation investigating the role of central nervous system dysfunction in specific learning difficulties and anxiety disorders. The INPP has successfully developed effective methods of intervention and treated thousands of children across the globe. INPP Research has found that the underdevelopment of early reflex patterns and the functioning of the central nervous system are key factors in learning problems such as those described in the main article on these pages.

Designed for children with reading, writing and co-ordination problems, the INPP Exercise Programme gives the brain a "second chance" to improve the neurological foundation for balance, coordination and postural control. Research studies show effective treatment of the cause of symptoms in 80 per cent of children.

How does it work? An initial, non-invasive assessment is followed up with a simple, progressive ten-minute daily exercise programme – monitored and developed over the school year.

Exercises can be performed as part of a general physical education class or outside school hours. For more information visit [www.inpp.org.uk](http://www.inpp.org.uk).