



DANCE CONCEPT: BALANCE

Let's bring some BALANCE into our lives! We played with balancing shapes, falling, swinging, swaying, tipping and tilting; all of which is good for developing the vestibular system. The vestibular system gives us a sense of balance and spatial orientation in relation to gravity. For example, it tells us if we're upright or upside down, if we're falling so that we can catch ourselves and if we're moving or stopping.

The vestibular system is the first system that develops in utero and it takes the longest to develop, all the way into adolescence. From the vestibular system there are nerves to every major muscle group in the body, and is responsible for coordinating motor movements and sensor processing as well as speech and language skills. Hence, making this the most important system to stimulate during the early years.

Important functions of the vestibular system:

1. Allows us to **coordinate our eye movements with our head movements** – e.g. turning our head to watch a moving object (following a soccer ball on the field), and even looking across a page to read
2. **Helps develop and maintain normal muscle tone** – e.g. allows us to hold our body in position and to maintain positions, especially important in helping keep our heads up (a child being able to sit & learn in the classroom)
3. **Balance, equilibrium and coordination of both sides of our bodies** – e.g. riding a bicycle or cutting with scissors

A child with a healthy vestibular system will feel confident & safe during movement activities knowing that his body will adapt and be able to maintain his balance and keep himself from falling or getting hurt.

On the other hand, when a child's vestibular system is not functioning correctly, they may be fidgety or clumsy or slouchy and may have difficulty in motor coordination & planning tasks such as jumping jacks, skipping, or even coordinating movements of the mouth, resulting in difficulty with speech production.

For more understanding of the vestibular system, check out this link where it is explained in a very easy-to-understand manner, together with activities to promote a healthy vestibular system. Enjoy!

<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/vestibular/>