

COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.



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Get Moving!

We all know that moving our bodies is essential to good health. The tricky part can be finding moments in the day to fit in that movement! For early childhood programs, it can be especially difficult in the winter months, when we may get less outdoor time, where much of the movement typically occurs. This pushes us to be more intentional about how we encourage movement in our programs.



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Benefits of Movement Activities in Early Childhood Education

Movement activities help to strengthen gross motor skills, but there are so many other benefits to encouraging young children to move their bodies!

- **Brain and learning:** Movement helps increase oxygen flow to the brain. It also helps to improve focus and memory, which in turn helps children learn and retain information.
- **Confidence:** Mastering new gross motor skills helps children build confidence.
- **Social skills:** Games and songs that incorporate movement can encourage working together and taking turns.
- **Self-regulation:** Movement can be an effective reset tool when children are struggling with their emotions.

Moving, Moving, All Day Long

Keep in mind that you can work movement into any part of your day. It does not have to be a scheduled activity! Try these tips for incorporating movement throughout your day...

Circle time- Circle time or morning meetings, if you have them, can be whatever you would like them to be; it's not just about calendars and weather! You can add songs that encourage movement, such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," "Shake Your Sillies Out," or "Wheels on the Bus." You can even choose songs that match the season or the children's current interests.



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Offer props- Fill a bin of props for dancing. Add some silk scarves and ribbon sticks or rings (you can even make these with materials you have at home or in your classroom). You can also include shaker eggs, jingle sticks, and maracas! **Ensure that items like scarves, ribbons, and jingle bells are only used with older children; they can pose a safety hazard for children under 3.**

Transitions- Help make transitions smoother by adding movement between the end of one activity and the start of the next. Try a quick game of Simon Says or animal charades- they don't require setup or a lot of space.

Follow the Leader- Let each child take turns being the leader and demonstrating different movements for the other children to imitate as they move around the room.

Infants and Toddlers Need to Move Too!

Keep in mind that you can work movement into any part of your day. It does not have to be a scheduled activity! Try these tips for incorporating movement throughout your day...

Tummy time is essential for younger infants, helping them reach a variety of developmental milestones. Tummy time should take place on a firm surface under close supervision.



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Crawling obstacle courses- Try putting out different items for infants to crawl around or over, such as pillows or cushions. Do this on a carpeted surface in case of tumbles. You can also add a tunnel for them to crawl through, a wall of stacked soft blocks to knock down, or large stuffed animals to go around. **Be sure to stay within arm's reach and supervise closely.**

Movement breaks to Support Self-Regulation

Movement breaks are especially helpful for children who struggle with self-regulation. Even simple movements, such as touching your right hand to your left foot and crossing the body's midline, engage both sides of the brain. One of my favorite ways to "reset" or change the energy of the room is to "shake it out". Start by shaking one arm, then move to the other arm, and keep going until you "shake out" each body part. These activities are also a great opportunity for educators to reset!

Be sure to keep moving during these long winter months. We at DIEEC would love to hear how you are prioritizing movement in your program!



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Resources

- [Why Movement Matters- Community Playthings](#)
- [Let's Talk about Movement- Headstart](#)
- [Tummy Time: What It Is, and 6 Major Benefits](#)