

Tips for Encouraging your Child with Motor Difficulties to Participate in Recreation Program

Motor Difficulties:

Motor-coordination difficulties occur when the development of motor skills is delayed, or when there is difficulty in co-ordinating movements smoothly. Motor-coordination difficulties can significantly interfere with a child's ability to perform everyday tasks.

The child with motor difficulties may:

- Appear clumsy or awkward
- Bump into, or knock things over frequently
- Experience difficulty with gross motor skills (e.g. walking, running, hopping, skipping, initiating a jump from a small height, climbing)
- Experience difficulty with fine motor skills (e.g. changing clothes, tying shoe laces, doing up buttons, holding a pencil)
- Have difficulty adjusting movements in response to changes in the environment (e.g. gradually slowing down a movement or changing direction quickly)
- Have difficulty figuring out the necessary force and direction to throw an object or ball towards a target
- Have difficulty positioning body and hands in an optimal position to catch an object or ball
- Have difficulty learning new motor skills
- Once learned, some motor skills may be performed quite well while still having difficulty performing other skills
- Avoid or appear to be uninterested in tasks that require physical movement
- Demonstrate frustration, have decreased self-esteem, and may display lack of motivation

Why recreation programs?

- The right recreation activity provides a fun and motivating opportunity for your child to practice their therapy goals... without the therapy!
- Finding an activity that is personally motivating means that a child will want to go back and participate in the recreation activity, even if there are parts of the activity or routine that are challenging



Tips for finding the right recreation program:

- Choose a program that will interest your child
- Look for a recreation provider that focuses on fun and recreation rather than competition. Sometimes smaller studios/clubs are a better fit for children with motor difficulties as there are more opportunities for communication and personalization
- Look for programs with low student to instructor ratios
- Look for multi-sport programs that offer opportunities for children to try many different activities. This way they get exposure to many different skills and lots of variety in case they decide they do not like one particular sport
- Look at the Community Recreation Program Directory under the multi-sport category on the KidsAbility website for programs that are offered in the community www.kidsability.ca



Sharing information about your child:

- Let the program know that your child may have motor difficulties, and give them some tips for helping your child to participate in recreation. Change the equipment or adapt the task (e.g. roll a larger ball or roll it more slowly)
- More program adaption and activity modifications ideas can be found in the Therapeutic Recreation section of the KidsAbility website
- If things are going well, ask the instructor what strategies they used to encourage participation. Then you can share those strategies with future coaches or instructors
- Create an *All About Me* handout to give to the program leaders prior to the start of the program. Visit Therapeutic Recreation section of the KidsAbility website at www.kidsability.ca for instructions on how to create an *All About Me* handout as well as examples



Preparing your child for the program:

- Try to anticipate what your child's difficulties will be, and give your child enough information to ease their worries (e.g. who will be there to offer them help if they need it, that having fun is more important than mastering a skill, etc.)
- Visit the program ahead of time if possible, and/or look at pictures of the program/facility online with your child
- Ask the program if they have a social story about the program
 - Reading a story about the program, and what is going to happen during the program, can reduce anxiety about some of the physical skills they may be asked to perform
 - Visit Therapeutic Recreation on the KidsAbility website at www.kidsability.ca for examples of social stories and a handout on creating a social story

Seek help if participation in community recreation is not going well:

- If your child is experiencing challenges participating in, or is at risk of removal from a community recreation program, contact KidsAbility
- A Recreation Therapist can work with you and the program leader to explore participation strategies, provide education or training and problem solve to help your child participate in, benefit from, and enjoy community recreation

**For more information, training or consults please call
KidsAbility and ask for a Recreation Therapist
519-886-8886 or 1-888-372-2259**

