

DYSPRAXIA.

Dyspraxia:- the name given to a condition suffered by some 'clumsy' children. It affects up to 1 in 12 people both children & adults -- it is a hidden handicap as there is no obvious disability. There are 3 times as many boys as girls with this problem.

They may not be able to do things such as catch a ball, tie shoe laces, find it hard to ride a bike etc. Their hand writing may be so untidy that others cannot read it. Adults may be totally disorganised, find it hard to socialise, driving a car or doing DIY can be very difficult for them.

A child with Dyspraxia is often of average or above average intelligence & with the correct help will reach their full potential. However without help their self esteem may be so low that they may feel that it is not worth making any effort at all.

You may also meet the term DCD:-developmental co-ordination disorder which in many ways is similar to dyspraxia or global delay developmental disorder which indicates a low IQ so will have learning difficulties as well as co-ordination problems.

As well as being generally clumsy a dyspraxic child will have problems with both gross & fine motor skills. Gross - the large movements of the body such as those required for balancing walking & running (things we take for granted) Fine- the smaller movements of the body hands, fingers, also eye-hand co-ordination. Another problem is with sequencing, putting things in the right order.

Riding is very good therapy for dyspraxic children as all the 'skills' can be helped to improve. Mounting the pony--- just walking up a mounting block, getting a foot into the stirrup & swinging a leg over the pony's back to arrive in the saddle can take an enormous amount of effort. It has involved gross & fine motor skills, & sequencing. Getting it all in the right order has to be

thought out & can take time (don't rush them!) Once on there is the problem of balancing - the movement of the horse can challenge their core stability & hopefully improve it. Fine motor skills, eye & hand co-ordination can also be helped in many ways & as their riding improves so their confidence & self esteem rises.