

Moro Reflexes

Calm & Connected Reintegration

Building emotional regulation, attention and resilience through gentle neurodevelopmental movement




Boggle Eyes Starfish X10

Draw a range of coloured shapes to a whiteboard / wall (or blu tac shapes / write coloured letters etc.)

Sit the child in front of the wall and ask them to look at the objects but turn the head left and right slowly.

Ask the child to name the colour of the triangle or letter C etc.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES

Starfish Yoga Ball Roll X10

Sit on the yoga ball with and on your knees.

Slowly, lie with the back on the yoga ball.

Hold arms out like a starfish.

Keep feet on the ground and steadily rock backwards and forwards 3 rocks.

(NB Adult to place hand on knees to steady the child)

The curl back to sitting.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES




Starfish Chair X10

Sit on a chair with hands on your knees.

Simultaneously, move the arms and legs to a starfish position, hold for 3 seconds.

Then, fold the right arm to the left shoulder and right leg to the midline.

Do the same to the right side so the right arm crosses to the left shoulder and the right leg crosses the left leg. Hold for 3 seconds and then quickly form the outstretched starfish again



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES

Calm & Connect: Moro Reflex Integration Cards

Building emotional regulation, attention and resilience through gentle neurodevelopmental movement

a structured set of movement-based activity cards designed to support the integration of the Moro (startle) reflex. These cards help children develop calm responses to sensory input, improve emotional regulation, and strengthen the foundations for learning, behaviour and wellbeing.

Detailed Information

What is the Moro Reflex?

The Moro reflex is a primitive survival reflex present at birth. It is triggered by sudden changes such as loud noises, unexpected movement, or loss of balance. The typical response is a startle reaction: arms extend, hands open, the body stiffens, and the child may gasp or cry.

This reflex is expected to integrate (fade) by around 4-6 months of age as higher brain centres mature and the nervous system develops more efficient self-regulation.

Why Does the Moro Reflex Remain Unintegrated?

The Moro reflex may remain active when the nervous system has not had the opportunity to fully mature or organise itself. Contributing factors can include:

- Birth experiences (e.g. emergency birth, caesarean, prematurity, birth trauma)*
- Limited opportunities for early movement (e.g. reduced tummy time)*
- High or prolonged stress in infancy or early childhood*
- Sensory processing differences*
- Neurodevelopmental differences (e.g. ASD, ADHD, dyspraxia)*
- Early illness or medical intervention affecting vestibular input*
- Ongoing environmental stress or emotional insecurity*

When the reflex remains active, the child's nervous system can stay in a constant state of alert, responding as if the world is unpredictable or unsafe.



What We May See in a Child with a Retained Moro Reflex

Children with a retained Moro reflex may show some or many of the following:

Emotional & Behavioural

- Heightened anxiety or emotional sensitivity
- Overreactions to small changes or surprises
- Difficulty calming after upset
- Mood swings or emotional immaturity
- Fight, flight or freeze responses

Attention & Learning

- Poor concentration or distractibility
- Fatigue during learning tasks
- Difficulty coping with transitions
- Overwhelm in busy or noisy environments

Sensory & Physical

- Sensitivity to sound, light, touch or movement
- Poor balance or coordination
- Motion sensitivity (e.g. fear of heights or movement)
- Tendency to startle easily

Social & Self-Regulation

- Difficulty with group situations
- Avoidance of new experiences
- Reliance on adult reassurance
- Low confidence or self-esteem



The Impact of Exercises to Integrate the Moro Reflex

Targeted, gentle movement activities support the nervous system to mature and reorganise. When the Moro reflex begins to integrate, children often experience:

- Improved emotional regulation and resilience
- Increased sense of calm and safety in the body
- Better focus, attention and learning stamina
- Reduced sensory overload and anxiety
- Improved balance and coordination
- Greater adaptability to change and transitions
- Increased confidence and independence

Integration exercises work by:

Repeating controlled patterns of movement that mimic early developmental stages
Strengthening connections between the brainstem, vestibular system and higher brain centres

Supporting the child to shift from a reflex-driven response to a thoughtful, regulated response

Over time, this allows the child to respond rather than react, creating stronger foundations for learning, relationships and wellbeing.

How These Cards Support Children

These cards provide:

- Clear, accessible instructions for adults and children
- Low-pressure, play-based movement activities
- Opportunities for co-regulation and connection
- A consistent, predictable routine that supports nervous system safety

They are suitable for:

- Classrooms
- Specialist provisions
- Home use
- Therapeutic or intervention settings

X10

Starfish Yoga Ball Roll

Sit on the yoga ball with and on your knees.

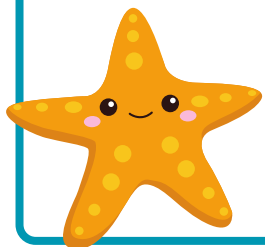
Slowly, lie with the back on the yoga ball.

Hold arms out like a starfish.

Keep feet on the ground and steadily rock backwards and forwards 3 rocks.

(NB Adult to place hand on knees to steady the child)

The curl back to sitting.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



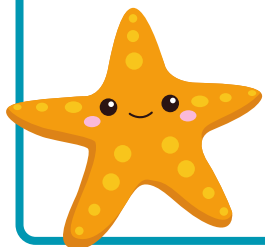
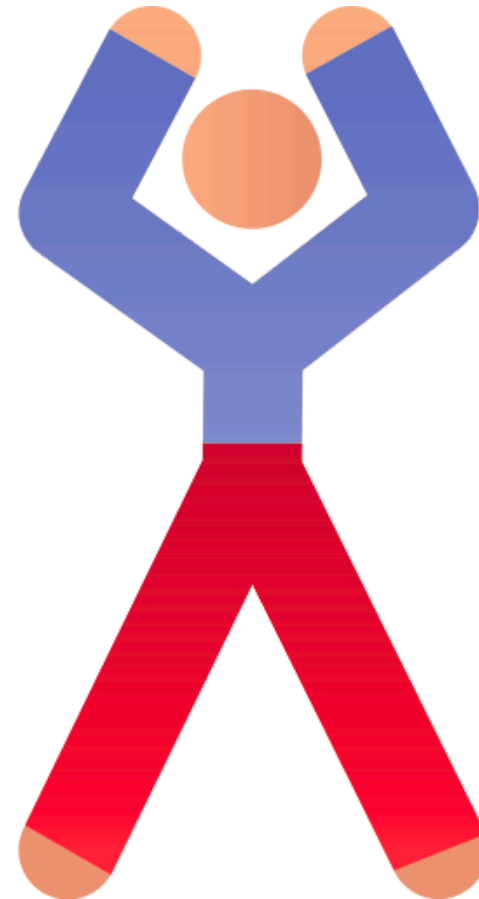
X20

Starfish Squat

Start with standing like a starfish looking up to the sky.

Keep feet where they are and slowly curl down into a squat position and tuck head in.

Then uncurl back up to the sky looking up to the sky and finishing as the starfish.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



X5

Crab Angels

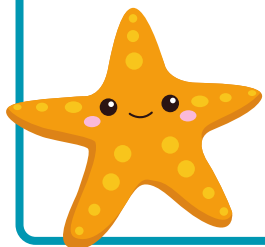
Lie on the ground, back on the floor. Palms face down.
Slowly open the arms and legs in unison.

x5 with legs opening and closing together

x5 with legs opening and arms closing

x5 with left side opening and right side closing

x5 with right side opening and left side closing



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



X5

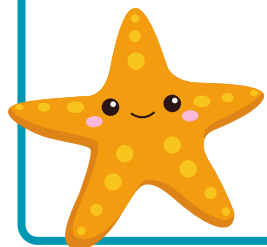
Starfish Curls

Lie on the ground with arms and legs out.

Bring the chin to the chest, fold your arms across the chest and curl up the legs, hold for 3 seconds.

Uncurl slowly back out to the starfish position.

Keep looking straight ahead.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



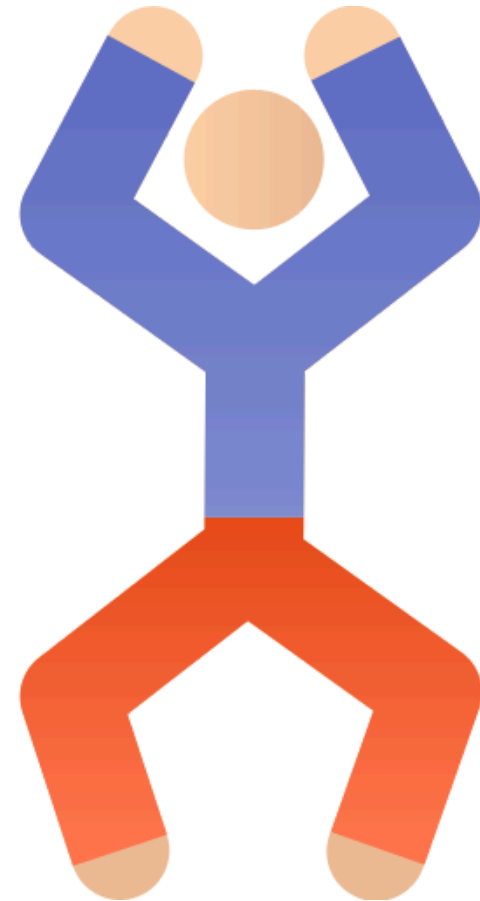
X5

Starfish Cross

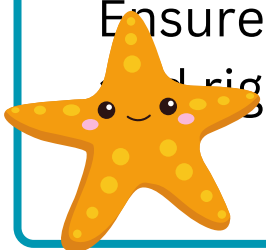
Sit on the yoga ball and hold knees.
(Child may need knees holding steady).
Stretch arms up as high (do not over stretch), lean backward only enough to engage the core.
Cross arms and place near the opposite shoulder.
Then bend forward and curl to the knees.

Try again with feet a little further away from the ball (partner to steady feet).

Alternate which hand crosses over.
Ensure left right arm crosses over right
right arm crosses over left.



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



X10

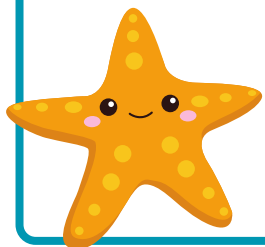
Starfish Chair

Sit on a chair with hands on your knees.

Simultaneously, move the arms and legs to a starfish position, hold for 3 seconds.

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MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



Starfish Hip Hop

X10

Stand and shake out both arms and legs.

Cross the right hand over the left arm and
the right leg over the left leg.

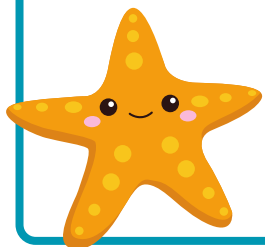
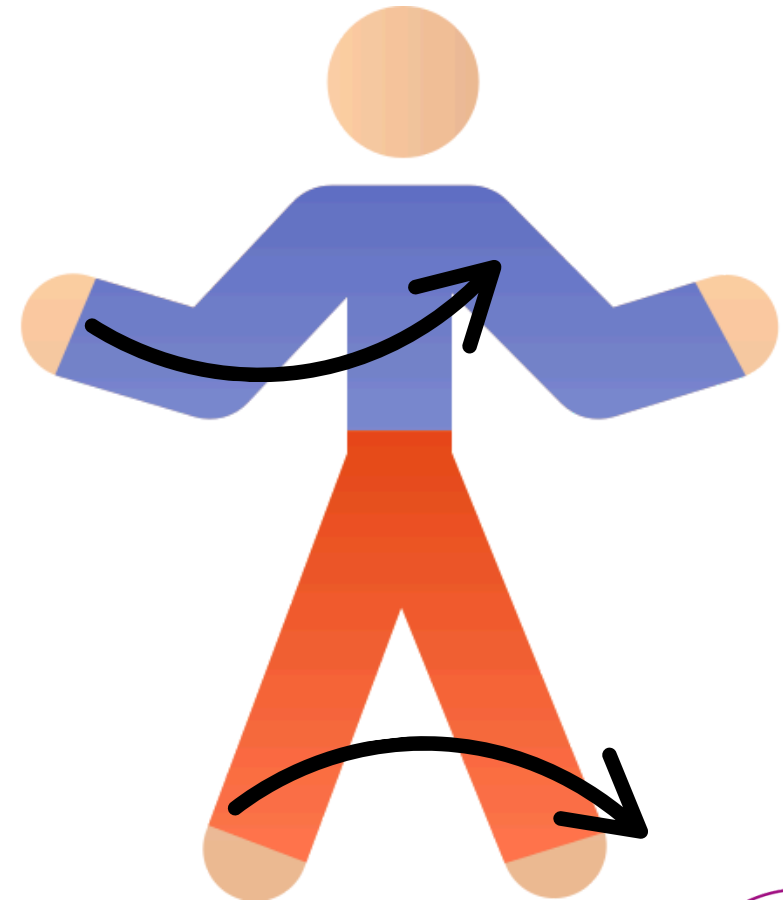
Uncross and shake the legs and arms out.

Raise the hands and flutter the fingers
The cross the left hand over the right arm
and the left leg over the right leg.

Uncross and shake the legs and arms out.

Raise the hands and flutter the fingers

Try to speed up and hop to change moves



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



X10

Lazy Starfish

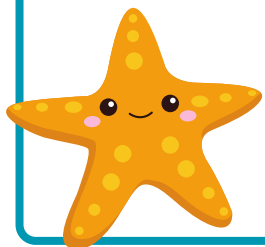
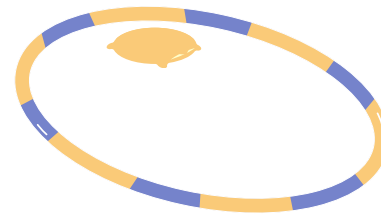
Lie on your back on the floor.

Place a pile of beanbags either side of the shoulders.

Place a hula hoop about 2 metres away from your feet.

Lean forward slightly and use your right hand to take a bean bag from your left pile of beanbags and throw into the hoop.

Then, grab a beanbag from the left hand from the pile to the



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES



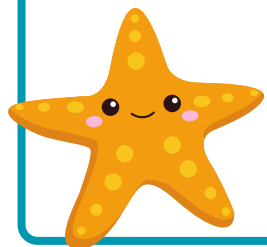
Boggle Eyes Starfish

X10

Draw a range of coloured shapes to a whiteboard / wall (or blu tac shapes / write coloured letters etc.)

Sit the child in front of the wall and ask them to look at the objects but turn the head left and right slowly.

Ask the child to name the colour of the triangle or letter C etc.



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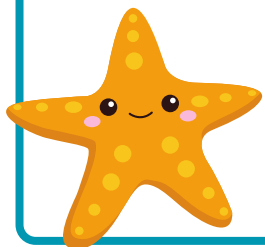
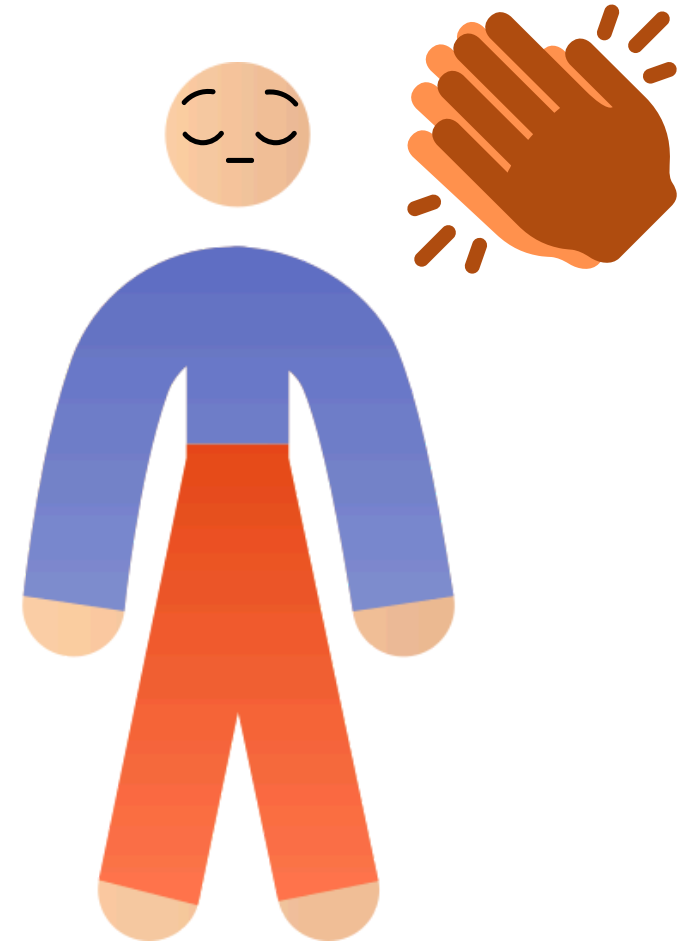


TEST FOR MORO REFLEX



Stand behind the child with their eyes closes and clap loud once.

If the child is frightened or jumps, they may have retained the Moro Reflex



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES

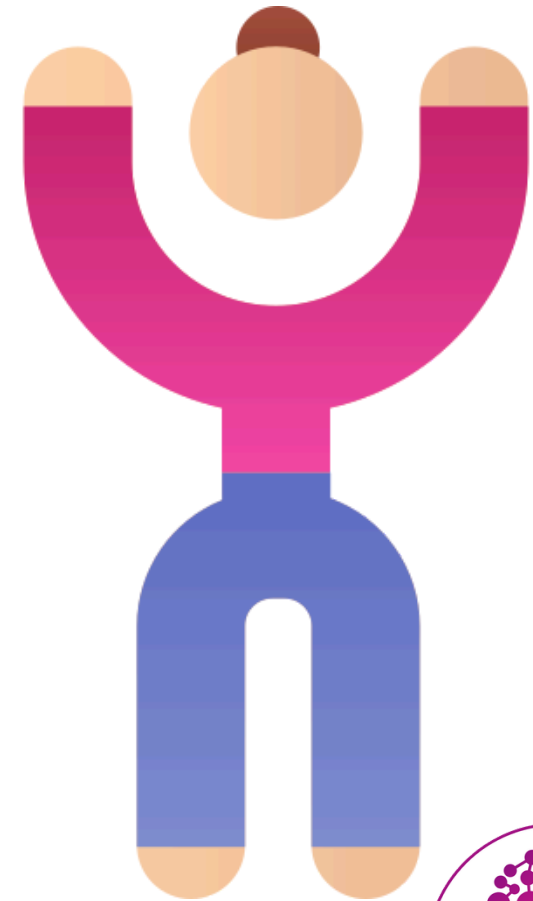


Checklist FOR MORO REFLEX



Child maybe:

- Easily distracted
- Hypersensitive to light, sound or touch
- Big emotions for apparent minor issues
- Dysregulates easily or has emotional outbursts
- Impulsive
- Aggressive
- Emotionally immature
- Withdrawn, low self esteem and / or perception
- Socially awkward or has difficulty making friends
- Poor balance and coordination
- Diagnosis or suspected ASD, ADHD or ADD
- Poor digestion and food sensitivities
- Health issues such as allergies or asthma
- Gets travel or car sickness



MORO REFLEX EXERCISES





Inclusive education through brain-based learning

BrainBuildingStudio

TikTok

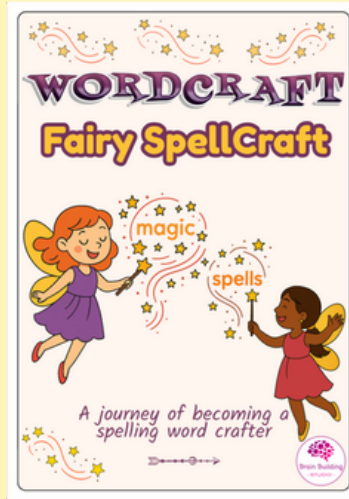
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