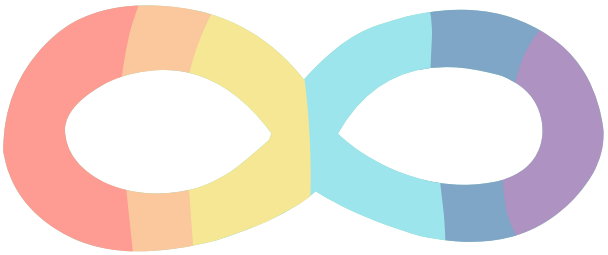
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia)

Notes from
ndhelp.co.uk

About

This is the core content that will be used to create a workbook on dyspraxia. Because we believe in making information freely accessible, we want you to have access to our workbooks in all stages of development. We hope you find it useful!

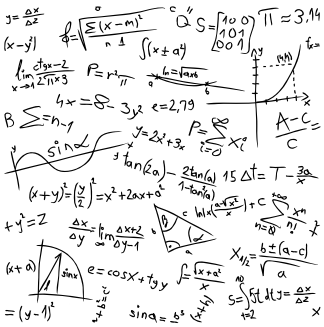


What is DCD?

DCD or **dyspraxia** is a **developmental** co-ordination disorder. It is present from **childhood** and is often co-morbid to other neurodiversities, like **ADHD** and **Autism.**

Signs include challenges with **balance, co-ordination** and **motor skills** (either **fine** motor skills like **handwriting**, or **gross** motor skills like kicking a ball). Everyone is different.

In other areas of life, we might experience challenges with **socialising, organisation, learning** and daily living skills, like **washing**, **cooking** and **cleaning**.



Different, not deficient

Being neurodivergent does not mean you have an illness or disease. These are not deficits to be “fixed” but simply differences in the way the brain works.

Causes of DCD

There is no one cause of DCD, but it is more likely in people who are **born early,** are **neurodivergent**, or have a **family history** of neurodevelopmental conditions.

It tends to show up in **childhood** and it has even been suggested that the **maternal environment** (your mother's environment) when you were in the womb could be linked.

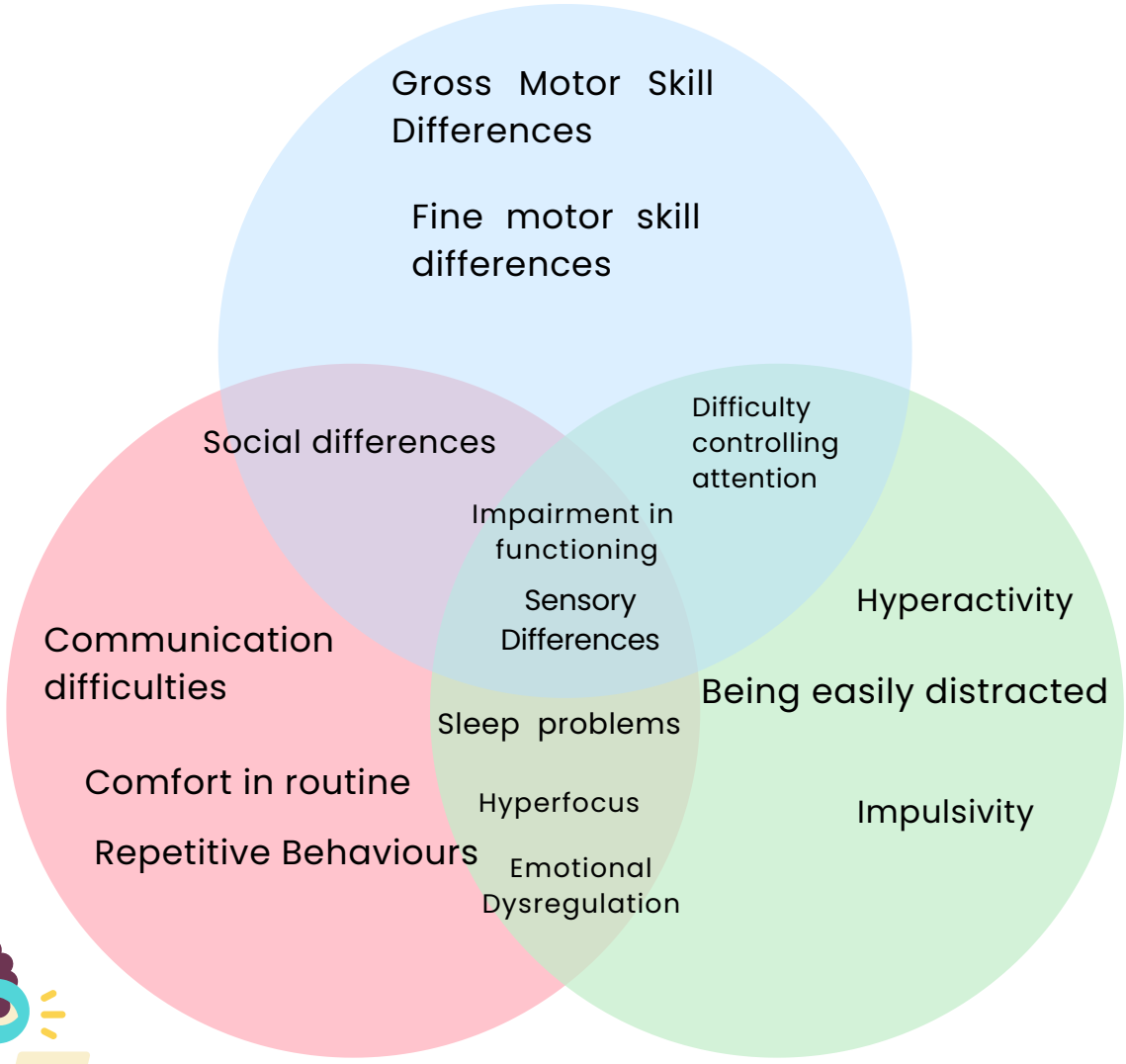
Among other structural differences, there's a center in our brain referred to as the **action observation network** (fronto-parietal network of neurons)

It activates when we watch someone perform an action, or we try to imitate them**.** Research suggests **in DCD this doesn't happen as much.**

This may explain why we find some tasks difficult: we may **struggle to imitate**, and therefore **learn, from others.**

Neurotype

DCD may be a coordination disorder, but it shows up in other areas too. It shares some similarities with **ADHD** and **Autism.** When many people think of dyspraxia, they might think it's "just being clumsy". It's not- it's a form of neurodiversity.



Tips

The definition of neurotype is: the characteristic way an individual's brain processes information, perceives the world, and interacts with others

Problem areas with DCD

Gross Motor Skills We might struggle with our balance, and bump into furniture or people. We might fall over or trip more than other people.

Fine Motor Skills We might struggle with handwriting, pouring drinks, carrying things or dropping things like our phone.

Sensory We might have sensory differences, including becoming overwhelmed more easily by sounds or light.

Tip: Not just clumbsiness

If you struggle with any of the above, it is **not** your fault. It can be so easy for us to blame ourselves.

After years of being called "careless" by others this can be a really hard belief to challenge.

We have workbooks on sensory differences and motivation too- whatever you struggle with, it is neurology, not weakness.

A CBT Approach

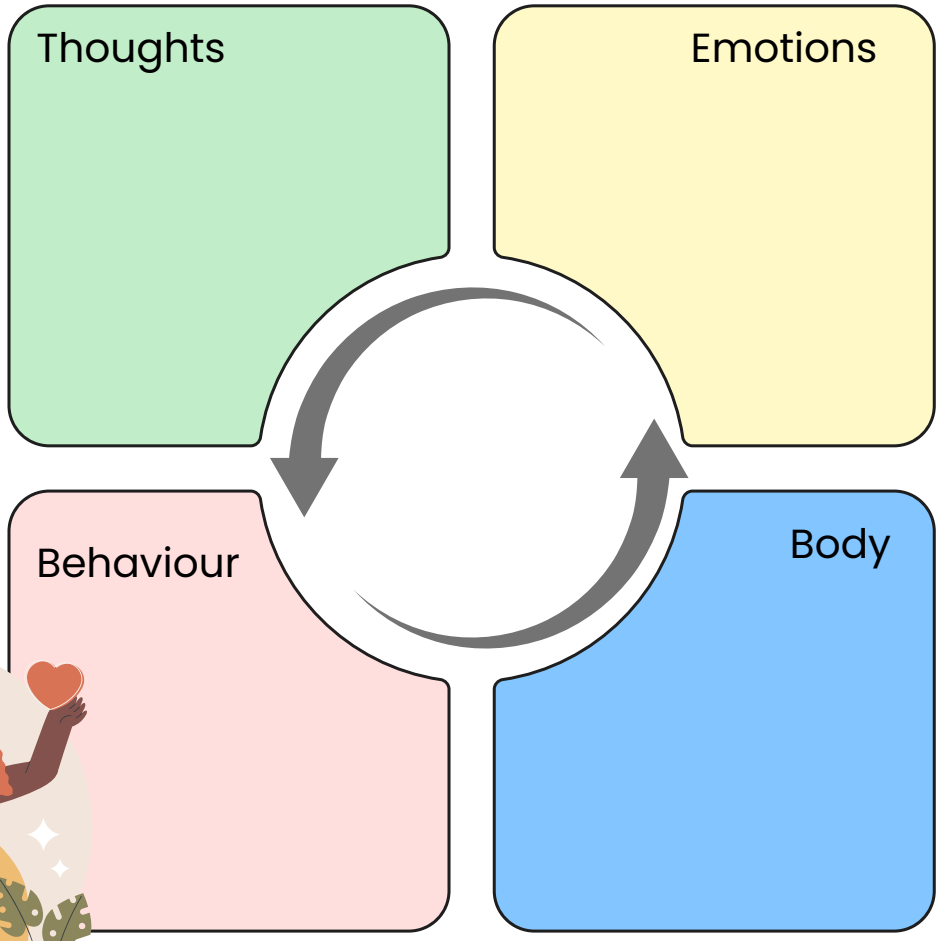
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a psychological approach that explores the connection between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Tip

When someone with dyspraxia struggles with a task, it can lead to thoughts like ("I'm useless", "Everyone else finds this easy, so I should too"). These thoughts can lead to emotions like shame, frustration. Sometimes, these feelings cause people to avoid tasks, rush through them, or hide their difficulties.

Your CBT cycle

Be gentle with yourself when completing this. Use an example of the last time you experienced difficulty with a task.



Looking at these thoughts and feelings is important, because:

- **It helps us break the cycle of self criticism.** It's really easy for us to fall into self blame and criticism when we struggle with something. By identifying our own cycles and triggers, we can start to gently challenge beliefs that there is 'something wrong with us'.
- **We can start to make behavioral changes.** When we feel less anxious, or self critical, we're in a better place to experiment with different ways of doing things to support our wellbeing.

Where to Start

A helpful question at this point may be: what is impacting you the most at the moment? Mine is being unable to pour my own tea.

Reflection: Are there any tasks or activities (at home, work, or my relationships) that I am struggling to complete?

Reflection: How do I feel trying to complete these activities or tasks?

Reflection: Why is this important to me? (What are the values underlying this activity or task?)

If answering this question seems difficult or overwhelming currently, we recommend the 'Getting Started: Core Values' workbook.

Task based support

Evidence suggests a **task based** approach to support, meaning focusing on each task individually, **adapting, breaking down**, and **practicing specific skills**.

Identify task → Identify barrier → Brainstorm Strategies → Make changes and review

In CBT this would be an adaptation of a problem solving support plan. There is an example on the next page.

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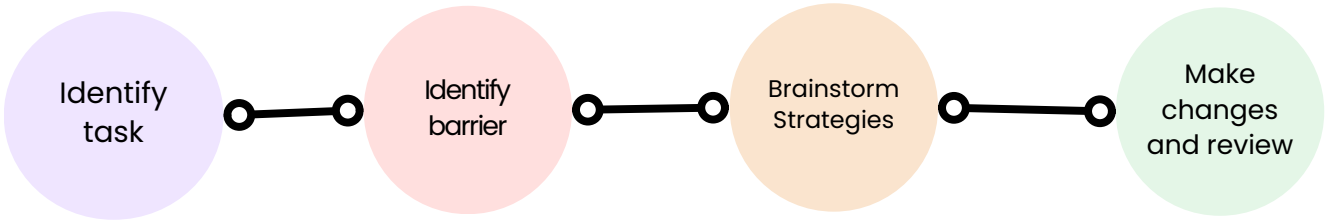


Task
Cooking homemade meals
Barriers
Fine motor skills (preparing ingredients), overwhelm (multitasking),
Brainstorm strategies

- Use pre-prepared ingredients, like frozen veg, dried herbs
- Try simple, one-pot recipes with fewer steps.
- Use kitchen tools that make prep easier (e.g., vegetable chopper)
- Break down the cooking process into a written step-by-step guide and tick off as I go.

Make changes and review

- This week I'll try a one-pot recipe using frozen chopped veg.
- I'll try using a handheld veggie chopper to see if it helps me feel more in control.
- After cooking, I'll note what helped and what I'd change next time.

Identify

Let's get specific and pick the first task we're going to tackle.

What task would you like to focus on?

Why is this task difficult?

- Is it hard to remember the order of steps for this task?
- Are there any parts of the task that feel overwhelming, confusing, or frustrating?
- Does your body feel clumsy or uncoordinated at certain points?
- Do noises, lights, or distractions in the environment make the task harder?

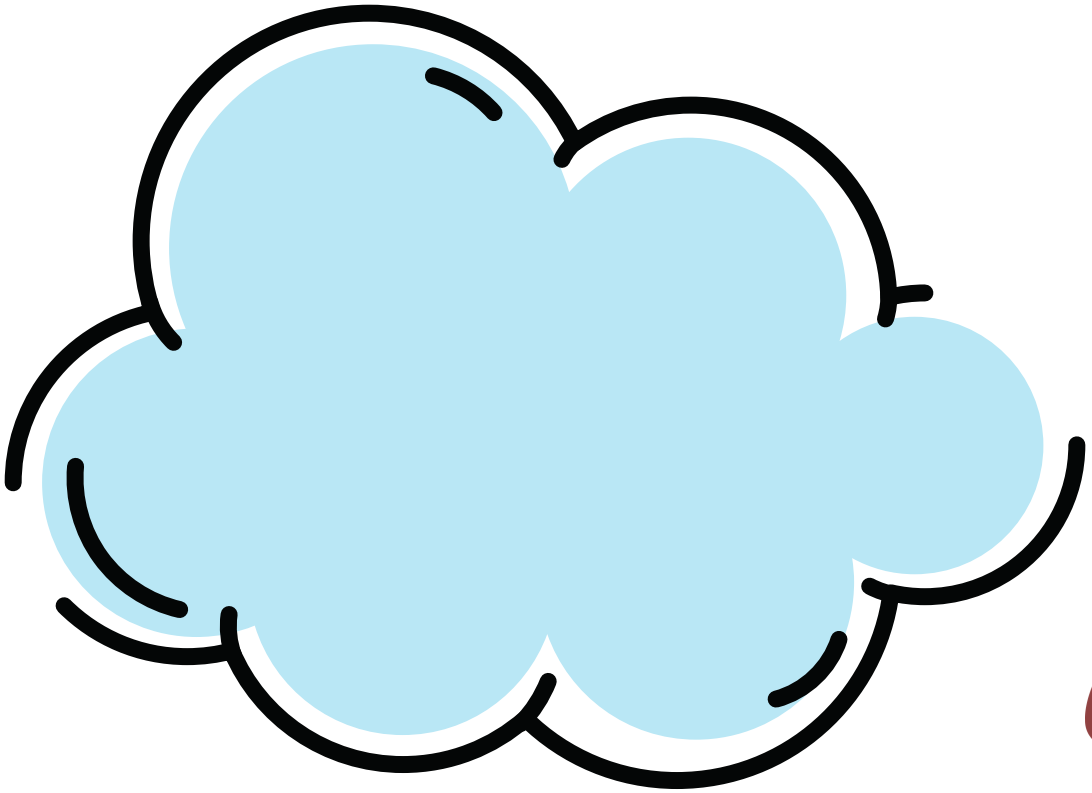
What is difficult about this task?

Tip: Everyone is different

The reason you might struggle with a task will likely be different to mine! Really take the time to explore what about the task is difficult, and what happens to your body as you try to complete the task.

Solution Cloud

What possible solutions can you think of? Don't be afraid if they're silly; I'd rather hire a butler to pour all of my hot drinks too.



Pick a few serious solutions and run through the strength's and weaknesses of each one. Which one is looking like the best place to start?

Solution	Pros	Cons

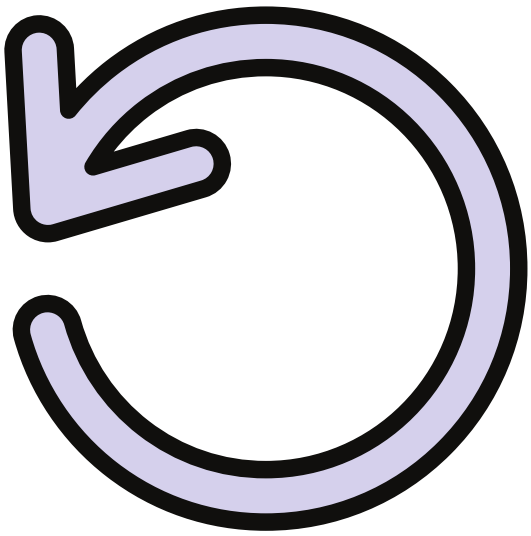
Give it a go!

Let's pick one of your solutions and give it a go. First, let's make a plan to get started.

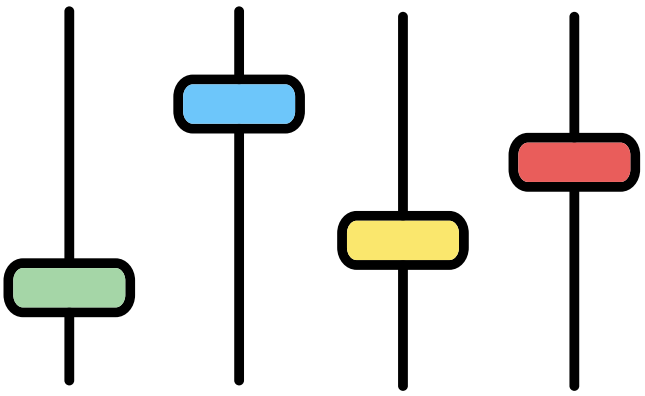
Specific: What task are you going to complete?	
Difficulty: Why is this task normally difficult	
Adaptions: How are you going to adapt the task?	
Review: (Fill in when you've completed the task) How did it go?	

And again...

It may take more than one try to adapt the task well for you, and you'll likely have to practice a few times.



Be patient and kind to yourself. There will be a few copies of the 'give it a go sheet' to track your progress across tasks. At times, it can feel like adjusting different factors like speed, technique, emotional state...keep trying, keep adjusting, and find a way that works for you.



Well done for taking steps to accommodate for yourself. Remember, your needs are, and always have been, valid.

References

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Found this helpful?

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