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How the Arts Can Help Your Child's Brain Injury Recovery

Our Friends · Tuesday, June 22nd, 2021

Wondering whether your child's brain injury could be helped through the arts? Here's how it could change things up for you and your family...

Every year, thousands of children end up in hospital with a head injury. Most of them are lucky enough to avoid a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) but some are not.

If they're severe enough, [brain injuries in children](#) can have a huge impact on their physical and mental health. Everyday activities, such as walking, speaking, and eating, have to be relearned. Relearning the basics is a long and slow process, but there are things you can do to speed up the recovery, including getting involved in the arts.

In this post, we're going to explain exactly how the arts may help your child recover from their traumatic brain injury.

What Effect Do the Arts Have on a Child's Brain Injury?

One of the worst things about brain injuries is that there aren't any drugs or procedures that fix the problem instantaneously. Rehabilitation is the only way to improve brain function after an injury, which takes time and a lot of patience.

Thankfully, the arts are a great way to rehabilitate a child with a brain injury. The arts blow a lot of other rehabilitation techniques out of the water, especially with children, because they're more enjoyable and less tedious.

But how exactly can the arts help children recover from brain injuries?

Visual Arts

Visual arts are the creation of a piece of work using various materials, such as chalk, clay or paint. Visual art can be immensely helpful in helping children with traumatic brain injuries in the following ways:

1. Improve visual perception and fine motor skills

Fine motor skills often suffer when a child has a traumatic brain injury. Handling paint on a paintbrush, or chalk between their fingers, helps children gain more control of their fingers and hands which translates to holding other utensils like forks and pens.

On top of that, working on the fine details of a painting or sculpture improves their hand-eye coordination. Trying to make 2-D objects look 3-D helps them develop stronger perception skills that they can use out in the world.

2. Increase attention and concentration

Whether your child is [painting](#), [drawing](#), or [taking a pottery class](#), they're going to need to concentrate. If they're doing a painting, for example, they not only need to concentrate on the part of the painting they're working on, but also how it relates to the rest of the painting.

This helps children with brain injuries improve their ability to focus for longer periods of time and keep more than one thing in their mind at once. This is one of the more difficult things for your child to grasp but it will get easier in time.

3. Develop perseverance and mental flexibility

Visual art doesn't always go the way you planned, especially when you're struggling with a **brain injury**. Your child might run out of the right colour, use the wrong brush, or draw something too big.

If your child wants the piece of art to look right, they'll have to keep working on it until they have what they want. The ability to persevere and be flexible when things don't go their way are skills your child can take forward into other parts of their life.

Drama



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Drama therapy is another way to help your child recover from their traumatic brain injury. Some ways it could help include:

1. Help them deal with their experiences

Drama therapy is said to help children who've been through a traumatic brain injury deal with their own experiences through a different medium.

It helps them express themselves and explore their experiences from a safe distance using stories and images. This allows them to come to terms with what's happened to them without having to directly relive it.

2. Promote an understanding of roles and responsibilities

When you're involved in drama, you need to learn what your role is and where you fit into the wider production. Out in the world, your child needs to learn where they fit into their family, their social groups, their workplace. Being involved in drama can help them learn that.

Dance and Movement

Dance and movement therapy uses movement to help children deal with the physical, emotional and cognitive challenges after a brain injury. It can help through...

1. Improve the production of brain cells

Dance and movement are both forms of aerobic exercise, and aerobic exercise improves the body's ability to grow new brain cells.

According to a [meta-analysis of studies](#) looking into the effect of aerobic exercises on people with traumatic brain injuries, aerobic exercise increases the production of brain derived neurotrophic function (BDNF) which is involved in brain re-organisation and re-learning.

So, if your child with a traumatic brain injury does more dance and movement therapy, they could improve their growth of new brain cells and enhance their recovery.

2. Rebuild the pathways between cognition and motor skills

When your child suffers a brain injury, the reference system in their brain which tells the nervous system how to perform a certain movement is damaged.

The books stored in that reference system are still there, but a new system needs to be built to house them. By stimulating their sensory system through dance, your child can rebuild the pathways between cognition and motor skills allowing them to relearn how to move.

Are the Arts the Only Way for Your Child to Recover from a Brain Injury?

In this post, we've covered three different types of creative arts and shared how they can individually assist the recovery of a child with a traumatic brain injury.

There are lots of other therapies out there that help children regain brain and motor function in the same way the arts do. The major difference is that children are more interested in rehabilitation if they're having fun.

Once your child has fully recovered from their brain injury they'll emerge with a new set of skills and hopefully a passion for the arts.

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This entry was posted on Tuesday, June 22nd, 2021 at 9:59 am and is filed under [Check This Out](#)

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