

THE PERCEPTION OF THE BODY-MOVEMENT

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Movement is about all the parts of the body, except for ears, eyes, nose and mouth (Luca). Movements are muscles that move (Matilde). You can do movements everywhere, at home, in the garden, alone and with friends (Francesco). When the body moves it makes movements (Giulia). Movements are things that you do with your arms, and if you don't have strength in your arms you can do them with your feet (Francesca) (Ceciliani & Borsari, 2009a)

Conversations with children show a perception of feelings and sensations that the body creates when it moves. The gross-motor movements are evident, involving all the parts of the body, except for fine motor movements: eyes, ears, mouth.

Not all the sensations reach a certain level of elaboration to become perceptions, so children seem conscious of the segmented movements of the body, especially arms and legs, and of the function of muscles (kinesthetic effects), but it's hard for them to perceive fine movements, like facial ones.

They say that “you can do movements everywhere”, and this shows a very interesting perception because it supports the consciousness of being able to interact everywhere and in any moment with oneself.

When you skate you do movements (Micaela). Movements are that you have a rock and you throw it, you make a movement with your arms (Simone)

Children are conscious of segmented movements of the arms (throw) and legs (skate), but not of other parts, and this is because legs allow children to move in the environment and arms allow them to manipulate objects. These experiences that they have since their birth favor many perceptions. It's not casual that in preschools children's favorite activities are manipulating, walking, running and climbing (Ceciliani & Bortolotti, 2007).

Let's take running as an example:

When you have to take something, like a ball that someone throw and you want to catch it (Giulia); You run to arrive first to a place, if you walk slowly you don't arrive early (Simone); You run if you want to chase a friend and play (Micaela); If you run very fast you can play with friends to who is running faster (Luca M.). When you want to play on your own and nobody is playing with you you can run (Lelio). (Ceciliani & Borsari, 2009b).

Perception make children understand the various aspects of running: moving in space to take an object, chasing friends, running to escape, running as fast as you can. Except for the running start, children seem conscious of the various meanings that running can have and the fact that it is a free and enjoyable activity:

I like to run, to run very fast like a lightning, I like it because I go very fast, I feel that my shoes are running, they are making noise (Penelope). I like running in the garden to do the sliding (Niccolò).

Under the educational point of view, it's fundamental to foster these movements that the child can easily perceive, in order to support self-consciousness about the child's body and movement.

At the same time, it's interesting to propose activities where there is contact with the ground (rolling, quadruped walking, somersaults) to foster the perception of the core of the body and of its important function of connecting arms and legs.

In order to facilitate the perception of kinaesthetic sensations it would be important to create experiences where children have to move with their eyes close (Cappi & others, 2014). By excluding sight, you foster the perception of kinaesthetic sensations, favoring the development of the body scheme and of its important function for the control of movement (Vignemont, 2010).

There is another perceptive aspect, connected to body and movement, which is linked to the feeling of tiredness after some activities:

When you jump a lot then you are very tired, in your heart there is tiredness (Alice). It's something that happens in your heart, it's a big breath because it makes you tired (Riccardo). You can't speak immediately, because my heart was beating so strong and I feel my breath that is choking (Filippo). I was feeling my heart beating so fast because it is tired and so it beats (Matilde). Wheezing is when you jump, you breath a lot because the heart is jumping, I get too tired and so I breath harder (Omar).

A clear conscience exists about the relationship between the cardiocirculatory sensations, movement and the state of tiredness. Children feel the physiological modifications that come from an intense activity with precision. Not only this, but the effects of tiredness are also felt:

then you get tired and you feel your body weaker (Luca Z.) the body has no strength left, you feel helpless (Alice) hanging (Filippo) you feel heavy, the body drags you down, it doesn't have the strength to keep you up (Luca), I'm heavy, i don't have any energy left, the energy was strong but now is weak (Francesco), I feel tired when my legs don't jump anymore (Alan), they are too soft to jump (Sara) the body gets all stiff (Marika) When you are tired you start panting, it helps me understand when i'm tired and when i'm not (Francesco M.).

The perception of the effects of tiredness is precise and clear, even if it is childish in its description : the body is weak, hanging, heavy, too soft or too stiff. It is important the sentence about the signals the body sends you, like the labored breath that helps you understand when you are tired. Kids understand the mechanisms our body has of protecting itself and, without any teaching, learn how to distribute energies between moments of heavy activity and moments of calm and rest.

When we think about the perception of the body we refer to cognitive aspects like the

consciousness that the children, if free to move, mature with great conscience and precision. For the kids the physical activity is a understandable feeling. Working on the perception of movement means facilitating and sustaining every activity that the kids do spontaneously, thru the offer of different and varied educational situations, able to sustain the happiness and pleasure of moving, being conscious of the body and of the feeling of tiredness.

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