from RAPPIN' ON THE REFLEXES: *CD, Songbook and Guide*
Integrating the Senses through Music and Movement

A SOUND INTELLIGENCE® Production

MOVEMENTS OF ORIGIN
Survival, Integration, and Consciousness

Infant Reflexes

When I first began working with infant reflexes, I felt as if I had stumbled upon the Rosetta Stone. I sensed that these reflexes hold a key to the deepest, most inaccessible recesses of our being.

What are infant reflexes? Babies know how to turn over in the womb, how to crawl out of the birth canal and take their first breath. They know these things not by their cognition, but by their instincts. Reflexes are a developmental code in movement form. Without them, we would not survive.

Reflexes are automatic responses. When they are triggered, we are compelled to complete them. The doctor hits our knee with a little rubber hammer, and our foot flies out. Consciousness has no ability to change this.

As we grow and develop, our infant reflexes integrate into the higher functions of the brain. Once this occurs, we are no longer triggered into a reflexive response. We have a choice about our movements.

Trauma

Trauma can block the development and integration of infant reflexes. Anything the pregnant mother ingests or experiences is transferred to her baby. Infusions of nicotine, sugar, drugs, naturally occurring stress hormones – all these are traumatic for the fetus. So are falls, loud noises, medical interventions, environmental toxicity, maternal allergies, anxiety and fear.

Reflex development is often impeded after birth as well. One factor can be the simple lack of movement opportunity. For example, babies primarily transported and held in portable car seats spend far too much time in a sedentary position. Babies in arms experience a secure but constantly shifting position that stimulates neural growth. This helps to develop their vestibular and proprioceptive systems, and plays a part in emotional security.

When my son was born, I was told that placing him to rest on his stomach might cause him to suffocate. However, infants have been safely sleeping on their bellies for millennia. Babies "practice" certain reflexes on their backs and others on their stomachs. In general, the supine reflexes develop reaching and fine motor skills, and the prone reflexes develop the skills needed for the gross motor skills leading to locomotion. Depriving them of "belly time" is like withholding the keys to the car.

Another common traumatic factor is overstimulation – computer or TV screens, fluorescent lights, noise, rough handling, or emotional distress in the family. We take the stresses of modern life for granted, forgetting how unnatural they are for the developing child.

Unintegrated Reflexes

When a reflex is active, we experience a unilateral directive. We literally have no choice about our movements. This can cause a variety of woes.

Unintegrated reflexes can cause irritation. When a baby's neck is brushed, the *Snuggle Reflex* causes him to move toward that stimulation. This can manifest as a child who refuses to wear turtlenecks, or as an executive who is constantly twitching in collar and tie.

Unintegrated reflexes can cause danger. The *Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex* is stimulated when the head turns to one side, and the arm automatically follows it. Have you ever been in traffic behind driver who turns steers in the direction his head is turned?

Unintegrated reflexes can contribute to developmental problems. The *Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex* is an instrumental player in learning to decode auditory information, such as vowel sounds. Many children with reading problems have an active *A.T.N.R.*

Directed Movement

We are taking in far too much sensory information every second for consciousness to integrate. Only 20% of our neural signals travel from brain to body; 80% move from body to brain. The brain acts primarily as an enormous filter, screening out unnecessary sensory data.

How do you change a code? When development goes awry, and difficulties in learning, coordination, emotion and cognition appear, how do you penetrate the unconscious do a rewrite?

As a kinesiologist, I believe that movement is the key. Certain movement patterns are coded to make it through the filtering brain. Through movement, we can reach our motherboard and tinker with the circuits of our assumptions.

But which movements will effect the needed change?

Infant reflexes are a truly universal language. Before each one of us was born, we vibrated to our mother's heartbeat with the *Spinal Galant Reflex*. Every one of us has somersaulted in the womb with the *Moro Reflex* and turned our heads to the *Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex*. When we re-travel the paths of these movements, we gain immediate access to a kind of immutable truth.

This truth is not personal and cannot be altered. A cube has six faces, each an exact square. The *Moro Reflex* is triggered by a drop in head position, causing the core of the body to arch into extension, and then to curl up and contract. Although our personal experience of the cube – or the *Moro* – will differ, the code for the cube – and for the reflex – are always the same.

Reflex movements provide a clear path through the distractions of the personal unconscious to our universal origins. The infant reflex is Ariadne's thread. We play the part of Theseus, following her unerringly through the confusions of the labyrinth, to find the Minotaur at its center. And when we reach that point of origin, we have the chance to release our traumas and compensatory behaviors, and truly begin anew.