MOVEMENT

What is this developmental skill?
Movement processing, or **vestibular processing**, is the brain's ability to interpret information about balance, motion, gravity, and head position. It allows children to maintain balance, coordinate both sides of the body, and move comfortably through space.

How does this normally develop?
Movement begins before birth and expands rapidly during infancy. Babies are rocked, lifted, carried, rolled over, crawl, cruise, walk, spin, jump, and swing. Each movement experience strengthens the vestibular system and supports balance, coordination, attention, and postural control.

How can neglect interfere with its development?
Children exposed to neglect may have limited opportunities for active movement or playful interaction. Others experience prolonged stress that keeps their nervous systems focused on survival rather than exploration. As a result, they may either avoid movement because it feels uncomfortable or constantly seek intense movement because their nervous system craves additional input.

What might this look like?
A child may:

- Constantly spin, jump, or swing.
- Avoid playground equipment.
- Become carsick easily.
- Fear climbing or heights.
- Have poor balance.
- Fidget constantly.
- Struggle to remain seated.

These behaviors often reflect vestibular differences rather than intentional misbehavior.

Parenting Implications
Provide regular opportunities for safe movement throughout the day. Activities such as swinging, climbing, dancing, jumping, scooter boards, and obstacle courses help organize the vestibular system. Observe whether movement calms or overstimulates the child and adjust activities accordingly.

From Understanding to Attunement
Instead of viewing constant movement as hyperactivity, caregivers can recognize that movement may be helping the child's nervous system organize itself. Meeting that need appropriately often improves attention and regulation.

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