

Cross Crawl exercises: Neurological Disorganization (this is a good thing!)

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What is Cross Crawl?

Cross crawl refers to movements in which we use opposition such as crawling, walking, running, and swimming. Opposition means that opposite sides of the body work together to coordinate the right arm and left leg, then the left arm and right leg.

Therapeutically, cross crawl refers to any intentional cross-lateral activity in which you cross the mid-line of the body, such as touching opposite hand and knee or foot. Performing this movement builds the bridge between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, allowing for electrical impulses and information to pass freely between the two, which is essential for physical coordination as well as cerebral activities, such as learning language, reading, and hand-to-eye coordination.

Why is Cross-Crawl Beneficial?

As soon as we start to crawl, this cross-lateral pattern of movement stimulates more complex brain and nervous system development and integration. In addition to firing neural pathways in the right and left brain hemispheres simultaneously, a cross crawl movement stabilizes the pelvis while mobilizing the shoulders, reinforcing the walking-gait reflexes.

In short, any time you do cross crawl, you are re-integrating your brain and nervous system and re-organizing your mind-body connections. Because we are daily, hourly, being bombarded and impacted by multiple stimuli and tasks, practicing cross-crawl throughout the day is one of the best self-care activities you can do for yourself. This Valentine's Day, love yourself and your family by building cross-crawl into your daily schedule. Think of it as a basic part of wellness, like drinking plenty of water. You will not only feel clearer, you will behave and perform better. Try it before homework, testing, or an important meeting, after anything stressful and between different kinds of activities. If you've been reading and it's time to go play soccer – cross crawl. If you're frustrated with a project – cross-crawl. You need to clear some cobwebs or recharge – cross crawl!

Through mind-body science, we now understand that physical coordination precedes cognitive coordination. The ability to do cross-lateral movements with the body literally lays the foundation for other cognitive abilities, such as readiness for fine motor academic work. Though it seems to be a fun, simple exercise, here's what cross-crawl is doing for you physically and mentally:

1. Stabilizes your walking gait coordination – builds core strength
2. Energizes your body and calms your mind – releases tension and stress
3. Improves your eye teaming skills – essential for focus, reading, and writing
4. Enhances whole brain thinking – your left and right hemispheres work together
5. Develops proprioception – your spatial and kinesthetic awareness

Cross crawl also offers an effective way to reboot your nervous system and re-integrate mind and body. You can use it regularly to both discharge and recharge your attention and energy. It's a great break from over- focusing and it works just as well to bring body and mind online. As a stress buster or a warm-up for doing your best, cross crawl has significant social-emotional benefits:

1. Increased self-awareness
2. Situational insight
3. Clarity of thought
4. Impulse control
5. Physical coordination in general

See below for examples of cross crawl exercises!

