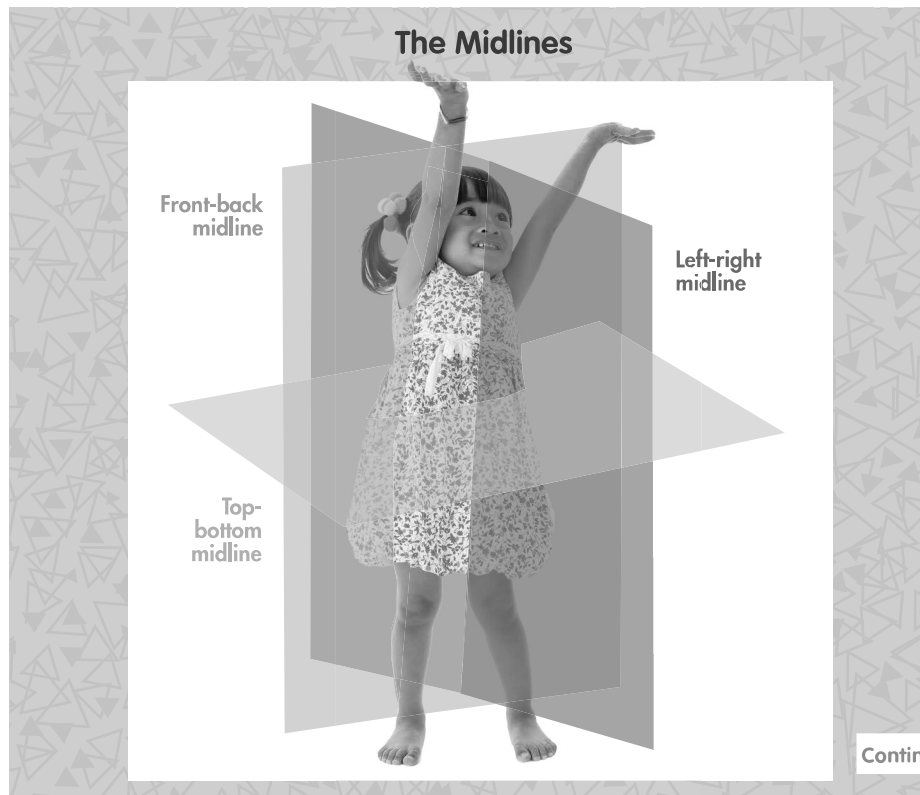


Meet the Midlines

By and large, it's accepted that young children aren't as well coordinated as adults. In fact, some kids appear downright clumsy! This is quite natural, and it's all a part of learning to control the biggest learning tool they have—their own bodies.

Coordination is the ability to move different parts of the body independently or together, at will (and automatically). Mastering coordination is about more than physical advancement. In fact, as the body and brain learn to coordinate movement, the brain itself is being fine-tuned for the highest levels of thinking, reasoning, and creativity. In other words, coordinated movement develops the brain for learning.

Coordination develops over many years through a kind of “bio-geometry” known as the *midlines*. The midlines are invisible to the eye, yet easy to understand once you know what to look for.



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Imagine the body divided by three lines. One line separates left from right. Another separates top from bottom. The third separates front from back. The midlines serve as the central pivot points for the body's most sophisticated movement patterns like crawling, walking, running, and skipping.

As the midlines develop, they help children isolate individual body parts for independent movement, then work to coordinate movements involving multiple parts of the body. And while all of that is going on, the brain is feverishly building neural pathways to keep up—and to create and strengthen the pathways that cross the midline of the brain (the corpus callosum). These pathways or “superhighways” facilitate communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. This, in turn, determines the speed, flexibility, adaptability, and depth of the brain. Think of it as doubling up on the brain's processing speed and power as it draws on the strengths of both its left and right sides to create “whole-brain” thinking.

There's no rushing midline development in the early years. It's a slow, natural process that unfolds from birth to about the ages of seven to nine (or even beyond that). For midline development, all that children generally need are fun-filled days of active movement, the freedom to explore what they can do on their own, and a little help and encouragement from you to try things just outside their comfort zone.