

Mixed Dominance

(sometimes referred to as Cross Dominance or crossed laterality)



Mixed dominance is when a child's body doesn't favour the same side of the body for a dominant ear, eye, foot, and hand. For example, may kick a ball with their right foot, throw a ball with their left hand, look through a telescope with their left eye and hold a phone up to their right ear.

As a baby develops and interacts with the world, their brain goes through a process called lateralization, in simple terms one side of the brain takes charge (becomes dominant) and the other side of the brain supports the dominant side. So, if information comes into the brain from one side (dominant side), it then organises and disperses the information in lightning speed to the proper areas but when you have both sides of the brain (mixed dominance) both trying to organise, interpret information (so both sides trying to be in charge and maintain dominance); information sent to the brain gets mixed up.

Having a mixed dominance increases the chances that a child may also have:

- Processing difficulties
- Obsessive compulsive behaviours i.e. fixating, participating in compulsions
- ADHD
- Learning challenges i.e.. reading, comprehension, writing
- Dyslexia
- Functional disconnection Syndrome

Recommended book: The Disconnected Child; Dr Robert Melillo



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info@childrenstherapy.online

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A brain communicates between both hemispheres, as well as within each hemisphere at lighting speed (So when we talk about hemispheres, we mean the right and left side of the brain). When a child has a mixed dominance, brain speed is often slowed due to longer processing times or miscommunication from each side of the brain. A great example of this would be if a dominant eye and ear are on the opposite sides (so for example, a child's dominant eye is the right, and the dominant ear is the left), vision circuits have to jump to the other side of the brain to connect to the listening circuits and can explain why some children can't read and listen at the same time.

How to check if a child has mixed dominance (I would recommend repeating a few times):

For eye dominance, give the child the tube from a toilet roll and ask them to pretend it's a telescope and look through it. Note the eye they put it to- that's their dominant eye.

To check for foot dominance, slowly roll a ball towards the child (ideally towards their midline- middle of them) have the child kick a ball and notice which foot they use.

To find out ear dominance, give the child a telephone and ask them to pretend to call a friend/or to pretend to answer the phone. Observe the ear they hold it up to. That's their dominant ear.



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For most children, the dominant hand will be the hand they write with. But that isn't always the case. Many children have been taught to write with their right hands because it's the norm, without any thought of the child's preferred hand. To confirm your child's dominant hand, hand them an object with both of your hands. Take note of which hand they use to accept it, or ask them to throw a ball. Again note the hand.

Activities that help

- Crawling
- Activities that encourage the child to cross the midline- see youtube @childrenstherapyservices



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