

Alternative Therapies

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The terms "alternative" or "complementary" are used to refer to non-traditional methods of diagnosing, preventing, or treatment of conditions. There are many different types of alternative therapies that have developed and are practiced for the treatment of Dyspraxia/D.C.D (developmental coordination disorder). This leaflet is not designed to discuss each one separately but more as a guide to parents who are considering using this form of therapy.

Proven treatment refers to evidence-based, or mainstream medical treatments that have been tested following a strict set of guidelines and found to be safe and useful. The results of such studies have been published in peer reviewed journals or journals reviewed by doctors, therapists, educational psychologists or scientists in the field. The treatments used in mainstream medicine for the treatment of Dyspraxia include Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy. There are many references available that shows the effectiveness of these treatments.

Many parents consider using alternative therapy either as an additional therapy alongside the mainstream treatments or because they are having difficulty accessing the local therapy services. While the Dyspraxia Foundation recognises that parents may consider alternative therapy, it is unable to endorse or discredit any individual complementary or alternative therapy treatment. However, the Foundation suggests parents ask the following questions before embarking on any alternative therapy. The following questionnaire has been taken from

“A Checklist for Alternative Therapies” by Brae B & Link H.¹ (*please see reference at end of leaflet*).

- How long has this therapy been used?
- How does the therapy work?
- What types of difficulties do the people who have received this therapy have?
- How many people with my child's/client's disability have received this therapy and what were the results?
- What research is available that I can see which shows how effective this therapy is for people with my child's/client's disability?
- How will you decide whether this therapy is appropriate for my child/client?
- Will you consult his/her General Practitioner/other Professionals for his/her medical/personal history?
- Is the therapy unsuitable for certain people? Who? Why?
- Are there any side effects? If yes, what are they?
- How will you tell whether the therapy has been successful with my child/client? What signs will you look for?
- Will you compare his/her behaviour/condition before and after the therapy? How?
- Will you be following up my child/client at all to see if any change has been long-lasting?

2. The therapist.

- How long have you been using this therapy? How many people have you treated using this therapy?
- How were you trained in using this therapy? Who trained you? How long did the training last?
- What qualifications are needed to undergo training?
- Can I see your certificate?
- Does anyone still monitor you to see if you are still doing the therapy correctly?
- My child/client is: years old with problems in these areas: writing, language, behaviour, learning, etc. (describe)
- How many people have you treated who resemble my child/client and what were the results?
- Can you give me the names and telephone numbers of any other parents/carers who have a child/client similar to my child/client who have received this therapy?

3. The arrangements for therapy

- How much will the therapy cost in total?
- Where will the therapy take place?
- Will I have to arrange transport and or accommodation for myself and my child/client? How much will this cost?
- When will the therapy take place? Dates, times, time span, time off school/work?
- Do I have to pay for the therapy in advance?
- What happens if I wish to abandon the therapy before the course of treatment is completed? How much would I have to pay?
- Will we have a written agreement about the terms and conditions of the therapy? Will there be a written report on my child?
- If my child/client gets worse, can I have my money back? Will I be entitled to compensation?
- If my child/client's condition does not change after therapy, can I have my money back?

1 A Checklist for Alternative Therapies” by Brae B & Link H. (published in Communication, Spring 1997, p14) has been reprinted here with the kind permission of the National Autistic Society.

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