

The BabyGym[®] Massage, Body Awareness and Potty Training

Marijke Fouché

“You can only use what you are aware of. If a baby is not aware of a body part, he cannot use that body part. It is the right kind of stimulation of the senses and muscles that create wiring and maps. Responding to the right kind of stimulation is how your baby first starts to learn and form the basis of all other learning- physical, emotional, social and intellectual” - Dr Melodie de Jager

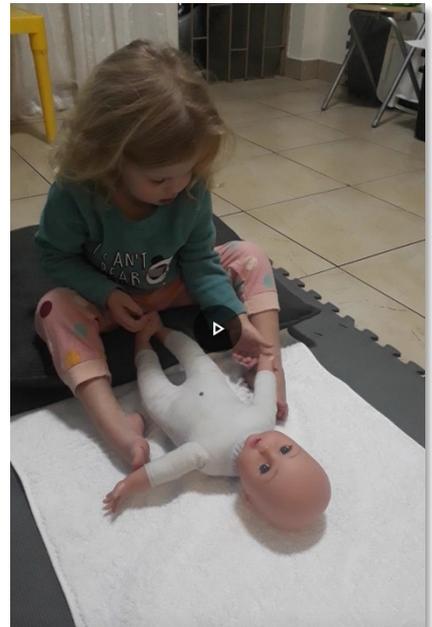
I am mom to two beautiful children. Both of them were born via cesarean section. My son was born in 2017 and we joined BabyGym when he was 3 months old. In the first BabyGym class you learn to massage your baby and I diligently massaged him without fully understanding all the benefits this included. As an overwhelmed and sleep-deprived first-time mom, I did not fully grasp the potential and benefits of the BabyGym program at that time. When he was 6 months old, we learnt that a second precious baby was on the way. Our daughter, Abigail, was born in March 2018. Needless to say, by that time I had completely forgotten what I had learnt in BabyGym and I never massaged her.

In April 2019 I enrolled for BabyGym Instructor training and a whole new world opened up! I learnt invaluable information about baby development and the importance of physical development in the first year of life, and how this supported further emotional-, social- and cognitive development.

When my daughter turned two, we considered starting potty training as it is generally viewed as a good age to introduce potty training and she also showed signs of readiness. After 1 week of trying we realized that she was not fazed by wet or soiled clothes. We halted potty training and tried again in 3 months' time, but unfortunately, there was no progress. There were a few other signs that her development wasn't quite on track and so I considered taking her to a professional for an evaluation. As a passionate BabyGym Instructor I wanted to intervene early and ensure that Abigail got the best chance on whole brain and body development.

On the 1st of August 2020 I took Abigail to an Occupational Therapist for a full evaluation. The therapist noted, among other things, that Abigail was indeed showing signs of poor proprioceptive- and tactile integration. She had low body awareness and her senses were underdeveloped. This explained why she seemed unfazed when she had wet or dirty clothes or why she couldn't register the need to go to the toilet ahead of time.

I then referred to my BabyGym knowledge and started to trace her body outline and massage her ears twice a day. This is a simplified version of a body massage that is suitable for busy toddlers and pre-schoolers. It is quick but effective! These exercises are used to increase body awareness in general. Within two weeks of starting to trace her body outline we noticed a marked difference in her body awareness. She now mostly noticed when she had a wet or dirty nappy. In the third week of August I started to massage Abigail every evening after bedtime. This time I didn't only trace her body outline but I did the complete full body BabyGym massage. Her body map improved so much! She also enjoyed the massage so much that she would come up to me and ask that I massage her ears etc. She even started to massage her dolls!



It is now two months after I started with the BabyGym massage routine and Abigail is fully potty trained. No more accidents either! Her body awareness has improved so much that she even registers during bath time when she needs to be taken out to go to the toilet. This is remarkable, especially if one takes into consideration that only one month earlier, she didn't even register wet and dirty clothes. Other skills have also improved due to her increased body awareness - she no longer stumbles and falls when playing and her hands / fine motor skills have also developed considerably.

As a BabyGym Instructor I know what we do in the first year of life prevents so many potential challenges. What has been very rewarding is to have experienced how these same exercises and principles can help your child at a later stage too. I couldn't be happier with the results!