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I always remind parents that you have to feed your garden with water and fertilizer in order to watch it grow and look as beautiful as it can. If you stop feeding it, it will wither. Something similar holds true for kids who have had sensory challenges. As they mature, if they no longer receive the kinds of physical activity and emotional connections that once helped them soar, new problems are likely to arise. Yet, there is never a reason to panic when you see a setback. Instead, be proactive and take stock of everything at play in your child's life, with a particular focus on her physical activity. Is she really engaging her body on a regular basis? Is she playing sports or exercising in ways that support coordination, bilateral movement, eye-hand interaction, and self-confidence? If not, explore new activities that sound exciting to her. Remind her that it's perfectly normal to be nervous as she begins new undertakings. Cheer her on as she challenges herself anew.

Once you know how to walk, you never have to relearn how, and the same holds true with all the tools that kids learn and acquire in therapy. They don't lose them, yet as they mature they must continue to acquire *new* skills. And if there is something getting in the way of acquiring them, then gaps can emerge again.

Puberty is a time in life when problems tend to re-surface. As kids' bodies begin to go through dramatic hormonal changes, new stresses of many kinds emerge. Body image becomes a real concern for the first time; relationships with parents, siblings, and friends can get complicated; kids often have to switch to new schools during those years, and the thrill and terror of romance begin to enter their lives.

Adolescence, in contrast to puberty, is the *psychological* time in which kids begin to try to make sense of who they truly are and what's most important to them. Peer pressure can become intense, and with it comes the risk of falling into the world of drugs and alcohol. Kids who have never found success, and who suffer from low self-esteem, tend to self-medicate more than others, using drugs or alcohol to numb a constant sense of inadequacy. Teenagers develop vital bonds with their friends and peer groups—and that can be very enriching—but when the group's focus is behavior that's dangerous, things can very quickly spiral out of control.

Maybe you remember your own adolescent years—perhaps not so fondly—so be sensitive to your child's ups and downs and know that professionals can help if they are needed, whether that means revisiting sensory-motor therapy, talking with a counselor, or simply taking another inventory of your child's sensory diet.

If your growing child seems less confident in his physical abilities, is having trouble concentrating, or isn't keeping up with his classmates, it may well be a sign that he's in the midst of a setback. Don't worry excessively about this, but don't ignore what you're witnessing either. Pay quiet attention and assess what might be helpful. Does more therapy appear to be the best option? Should you suggest new physical activities that will engage him, or return to activities that once proved to be both fun and beneficial, but that he's given up?

If you opt to take your child back to a clinic you used in the past because of your concerns, therapists there are likely to do a

brief re-evaluation that will demonstrate whether she has kept up with her developmental progress. Let's imagine that she left therapy at age six, for example, after meeting her goals and reaching age-equivalent developmental levels. If the re-evaluation shows that she is developmentally age-equivalent now that she's nine, that tells us that she's continuing to build her motor skills and that something else is likely the issue. But, if the re-evaluation shows that she's at a seven-year-old developmental level, then something has gotten in the way and she has not continued to progress on her own.

That's a strong signal that something is still a bit awry in her nervous system and is inhibiting normal, healthy, and typical progression. She made excellent strides in the past, and she will make great progress again. A new round of therapy, or an extensively revised sensory diet, is probably what's called for.

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