



Conditioning and Hands

Like the feet, your hands are the only other body parts that are constantly and physically in touch with the world around you. As sensory messengers, your hands are a great resource for connecting and conditioning your whole body. The hands, which include ten fingers, palms, and inner and outer arches, together with the joints of your wrists, two forearms, elbow joints, and upper arm bones, are all a part of the upper extremities you use to creatively express yourself.

Unique to the hand is a thumb, which makes it possible for you to grab, hold, catch, grasp, throw, push, pull, tear, caress, wipe, juggle, toss, plant, build things, and make love. You keep the hands healthy by using them based on their design.

A fanlike structure, the palms of your hands are designed to fully open and close, moving with mobility and flexibility in strong, stable and agile ways. Tentacle-like, your fingers are designed to wiggle, bend and extend. When used individually, fingers can direct energy to increase flexibility, strength, and balance. Each finger connects you to a specific emotional energy. By integrating the hands into your movement, you greatly reduce the build up of stress that can occur in the neck and shoulders when the hands are allowed to dangle and be carried by the trunk.

Integrate your hands in everything you do to sense dynamic ease, moving from the core and balancing the top, bottom, left and right sides of your body.

As you dance...

1. Use the palms of your hands to measure the space around you. Reach out and touch the space as if the space was tangible. Imagine the room filled with helium balloons and as you move the hands. Make and see the balloons move.
2. Use your palms to direct energy. Palms "away" move energy away from your body; this is a yang action. Palms "in" move energy towards you; this is a yin action. Using both palms in and out or up and down spirals the forearm bones, helping keep the shoulder joint healthy and happy.
3. Use the hands to activate your brain and to stimulate breathing. Hands activate the brain naturally. Using the hands in dynamic ways naturally triggers breathing. Wave and sense your breathing. Punch and sense your breathing. Chop and sense your breathing.

For more information

Ask your teacher for more information about this and other available Nia Handouts.

Get the Nia Book, *The Nia Technique* (2005, Broadway Books).

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