

## Hand-brain gymnastics



### **Objective:**

The goal of this activity is to promote and maintain good hand motor and cognitive skills. This is particularly useful for those who want to practice fine motor skills and strengthen the connection between the hands and the brain.

### **Description of how to do the activity:**

#### **Preparation:**

- Gather materials that are easy to handle and manipulate, such as sheets of paper, pencils, small objects that can be grasped (such as wooden blocks, beads or buttons).
- Set up a comfortable place for participants to sit and perform the exercises.

#### **Instructions:**

- Give the participant a sheet of paper and a pencil.
- Start with a simple exercise, such as asking participants to draw geometric figures such as circles, squares or triangles on the paper. Encourage them to do this with both their right and left hands.
- Continue with exercises such as copying a drawn image with both hands at the same time or using small objects to practice picking and placing.
- Alternate between exercises that focus on fine motor skills and coordination between both hands.

#### **Encourage discussion:**

During and after each exercise, encourage the participant to discuss how they felt and what challenges they faced.

#### **What is needed to perform the activity:**

- Sheets of paper and pens for each participant.
- Small objects that can be used for exercises.
- Video clips with exercises.

**Time required:**

The time for the activity may vary depending on how many exercises you plan and how quickly the participant progresses. Plan for 30 minutes to an hour for this activity.

**Alone or in a group:**

This activity can be done individually with an older person. It can be adapted according to needs and resources.

**Examples of different hand-brain gymnastic exercises:**

- **Mirrored drawing:** Give the participant a sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask the elderly to draw a simple figure, such as a triangle, on a sheet of paper. Then ask the elderly to draw the same figure with the other hand as accurately as possible. This exercises fine motor skills and helps strengthen the connection between the brain and both hands.
- **Bead tree:** Give the elderly small beads and a piece of wire. Ask the elderly to thread the beads on the wire with both hands at the same time. This exercises picking skills and coordination.
- **Highest tower:** Use small wooden blocks or building blocks for this activity. Ask the elderly to build the highest tower they can with both hands at the same time. This exercises grip strength and coordination.
- **Coloring:** Give the elderly a simple coloring sheet and some coloured pencils. Ask the elderly to color the picture with both hands at the same time. This exercises fine motor skills and creativity.
- **Letter copying:** Write a letter or word on a sheet of paper and ask the elderly to copy it with both hands at the same time. This exercises writing skills and letter recognition.
- **Button threading:** Give the elderly a thread with small buttons and ask them to thread the buttons on the thread with both hands at the same time. This exercises fine motor skills and patience.
- **Puzzle challenge:** Give the elderly a simple puzzle and ask them to solve it with both hands at the same time. This exercises puzzle solving and concentration.
- **Shapes and colors:** Draw different geometric shapes in different colors on a sheet of paper. Ask the elderly to point to specific shapes or colors with each hand. This exercises visual attention and coordination.
- **Word game:** Write several words on a sheet of paper and ask the elderly to circle or highlight specific letters in each word with both hands at the same time. This exercises letter searching and concentration.
- **Finger training:** Use finger puppets or small toys and ask the elderly to use both hands to make the finger puppets "dance" or play with the toys. This exercises dexterity and imagination.

**Example of brain-hand exercises:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWvS1\\_IES9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWvS1_IES9Y)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4X7vWF4UQY>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYtBIfCNL\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYtBIfCNL_8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKoap8rGoR0>

These exercises can be adapted to the participant's abilities and interests. It is important to encourage them to discuss their experiences and possible challenges during and after each exercise to promote interaction and engagement.

Source: The activity is created with inspiration from models and ideas from national material banks. [Äldreinstitutets material på svenska](#), [Hyvä mieli – Pohdintoja mielen hyvinvointiin -työkirja ikäihmisille](#), [Vahvike-aineistopankki](#)) and ChatGTP's proposal