Guidelines for big hug and fingerholds – both learned from Jin Shin Jyutsu
Notes prepared by Michel Friedman

Big Hug

Many of us engaged in feminist social change work, as well as survivors of abuse and violence can feel unappreciated at some deep level, though we may not realize this consciously. We might not always get the love, support and validation we require from someone else. Hugging oneself is a great way to show love and appreciation to oneself, and also to heal.

Instructions

Cross your arms and place your thumbs under your collar-bones - so left thumb is under right collar bone. Let the rest of your fingers rest gently on the edge of your shoulder blades. Drop your shoulders, smile, bring your attention to your breathing and give your best friend a hug. Honour and let go of everything that has come before this breath so you can be open to receive a new breath of life. Imagine that all stress and tension that you are holding in any part of your body can leave your body through your toes and feet. Now you are open to a new new breath of life.

The Big Hug helps to bring vital life force to and thus harmonise the total being. It is useful -

- Any time you feel very stressed or tense in your shoulders and neck or when you notice that you are not breathing very deeply, stop what you are doing and give yourself a hug for a few minutes - breathing deeply and reconnecting with yourself, appreciating your own life experience, wisdom and the unique being that you are.
- At any time when you feel the need to feel more centred or more grounded
- On a more physical level, for those suffering from any kind of lung or chest ailment, this is also a wonderful hold to help open the lungs.
- To get into a calm state when we want to start a meeting, or start writing or need to engage with something difficult or challenging

Fingerholds to harmonise your whole being and to manage emotions

How does it work?

Holding fingers is a powerful yet simple way to harmonise the whole being and to reconnect you to your core energy. Each finger is associated with pathways of energy that are connected to different aspects of the entire being as well as related emotions. The practice can thus help you reconnect with qualities you are out of touch with as well as to work with core attitudes and emotions. Emotions and feelings are like waves of energy moving through the body, mind and spirit. With strong or overwhelming feelings, energy can become blocked or repressed, resulting in pain or congestion in the body. Holding each finger while breathing deeply can bring emotional and physical release and healing. The fingerholds are a very helpful tool to use in daily life. In difficult or challenging situations, where anger or anxiety arise, the fingers may be held to bring peace, focus and calm so that the appropriate response or action may be taken. The practice may also be done as a meditation with music, or used before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and to bring deep relaxation to body, mind and spirit. The practice may be done on oneself or on another person. It can be used anywhere, anytime. You can also hold your fingers to harmonise the negative attitudes that lie beneath difficult emotions.

FINGERHOLD PRACTICE - DIRECTIONS:

- **Hold each finger** with the opposite hand 2-5 minutes. You can work with either/or both hands. You can also hold the centre of the palm, by folding your hands, or placing them together or holding a few fingers in the centre. Focus on those fingers which most feel like they are ‘asking’ for it.
- **Breathe in deeply**, recognize and acknowledge the strong or disturbing feelings or emotions you hold inside yourself.
- **Breathe out slowly and let go.** Imagine the feelings draining out your finger into the earth.
- **Breathe in a sense of harmony**, strength and healing. And breathe out slowly, releasing past feelings and problems.

Often as you hold each finger, you can feel a pulsing sensation as the energy and feelings move and become balanced. You can hold the fingers of someone else who is angry or upset. The fingerholds are very helpful for young children who are crying or having a tantrum, or can be used with people who are very fearful, anxious, sick or dying. You can also hold a finger to help you reconnect to an associated quality you are out of touch with.

_Fingerholds come from the theory and practice of Jin Shin Jyutsu®. See Mary Burmeister (1985b)._
Examples:

Vukani-Tsohang Africa is a women’s and youth project focusing on skills transfer, poverty alleviation and workshop for youth with special needs and disability. The project also runs workshops and dialogues weekly on domestic violence, human rights, basic services and other issues suggested by the community.

Thandiwe Mtimkulu, the founder of Vukani, (fondly known as Ma Thandi) learned how to hold her fingers some years ago benefited so powerfully from the practice that she has nicknamed it ‘finger-healing’. Here is some of her story:

I also benefited and managed to regain my health after I met Michel in the Gender at Work Action Learning Process. I had water retention and this was affecting my heart and the medication I was given was putting strain on my kidneys. I had deep venus thrombosis and could not walk for a minute without being breathless because my heart was 90% submerged in water. I was obese and could not even lift my legs because of the water in my body. My legs were dark because there was poor circulation, my face was swollen and I had constant pain in my heart. I even wanted to stop coming to the process because of my ill health. The finger holds that Michel introduced me to saved my life. I was so desperate that I decided to hold each finger for 10-20 minutes and meditated and prayed while I did it. As I held each finger I could feel the sensation and movement in my body and organs (lower abdomen, kidney, bladder and heart). This sensation was vivid and it surprised me. In the beginning this method was so intense that I had to go to the toilet regularly as if I’ve taken diuretic pills. I would sometimes do these holds while doing my feet exercises as the physio suggested. The more I held my fingers, the more I managed to release the water, the more I felt better. I also managed to go 7 sizes down.

Vukani also uses fingers in the midst of large community meetings. If for instance they find that there is a lot of anger while facilitating a community dialogue, they will stop the meeting and get everyone to hold their middle finger for a few minutes.

Another activist, based in India, practiced finger-holding while she was undergoing treatment for a chronic back problem. She had this to say:

I found the finger-holding exercise incredible at so many levels… I still do it, all the time, in all sorts of settings, and always when I am just still, or lying down. I feel I have released a lot of anger, pain, and anxiety through finger holding in the last two months… I feel liberated from a lot of the negative emotions that were holding me back in the past, and from the bitterness in several of my intimate relationships, like with my husband. Consequently, it’s created – or should I say freed up? - a lot of positive energy for anything I want to do.

Understanding the connections between the emotions, fingers, and addictions can also help us to have more compassion for why people get so attached to certain substances or behaviours. They are often trying to meet some need that has not been met in other ways, or are trying to ‘self-sooth’ the difficult emotion that is connected to the addiction. If they can address the underlying emotion or the associated need they might not need the substance so much. Holding the appropriate finger a lot can help them to harmonise these underlying needs. Stop watering negative seeds and focus more on the harmoniser rather than the problem.
FINGERS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO DIFFERENT ORGANS AND ADDICTIONS

**Drug addict – hardcore drugs**
Flow (water), courage, connection to ‘purpose’ – destiny is seeking harmonising

*Connects to Kidney and Bladder energies*

**Alcoholic**
connection to creativity, spirituality is seeking harmonising

*connects to liver and gall bladder*

**Smoka-holic**
Connection to joy, breath, lightness of thought (air) is seeking harmonising

*Connects to lung and large intestine*

**Sweetaholic**
earth, grounding, nurturing, comfort is seeking harmonising

*Connects to Stomach and Spleen energies*

**Workaholic – always busy doing – can’t stop trying or pretending**
Connection to inner fire, inner truth, self-esteem is seeking harmonising

*Connects to heart and small intestine*