**TIPS TO BUILD FINE MOTOR SKILLS IN YOUR KIDDO**

Fine motor skills involve the use of small muscles in our hands, wrists, fingers, feet and toes. Your child’s brain is in charge of coordinating these small muscles to perform actions such as writing with a pencil, holding a fork to eat, or picking up objects with their fingers.

**FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES**

1. Look for hidden objects in putty, Play-doh or clay.
2. Make slime or another resistive texture to allow the child to pull apart and squeeze.
3. Have the child look for hidden objects in different tactile substances (i.e. reaching into the sand and pulling out a marble).
4. Put snacks in snack bags or other plastic containers that would allow the child opportunities to manipulate snaps.
5. Use a squeeze toy.
6. Use magnet tiles or construction blocks to pull apart and piece together.
7. Place Velcro strips on the back pieces of puzzles for there to be some resistance when pulling the piece off.
8. Use clothespins or tongs to pick up small manipulatives to sort.
9. Use a squeeze bottle to water plants.
10. Put coins into a piggy bank.
11. String beads of various sizes onto string or pipe cleaners, making cute necklaces or bracelets!
12. “Write” in clay, sand, dirt or other tactile substances.
13. Use short cylindrical objects such as short pencils (ie mini-golf pencils) to facilitate a proper pencil grasp.
14. Peel stickers.
15. Use a hole punch.
16. Cut out simple shapes or along a straight line.
17. Build letters out of pipe cleaners.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF FINE MOTOR**

* It has been shown that fine motor skills factor into a child’s ability to learn numerical procedures. Finger counting is one of the most common and important steps for a child to learn how to count early in their academic journey. In order to participate in finger counting, a child has to have the fine motor skills to move their fingers accordingly. Studies have shown that a child’s fine motor skills play a large role in early counting and later translate to more conceptual counting knowledge.
* In order for a child to fine tune their handwriting skills, they have to be aware of how much pressure they are applying with their fingers, and what position they are holding their fingers in with regards to their writing utensil. Younger children tend to have large variations in their force and lower adjustment frequency when they are writing. This means they grip their pencils harder and don’t adjust as often when they are writing, leading to frustration with such handwriting tasks. Force control is an integral part of fine motor skills, especially in terms of manual dexterity. A child’s ability to manipulate and move their fingers early on serves a crucial role in their developing handwriting abilities.
* Screen time has become a staple of modern childhood. There are some concerns from developmental experts about the link between screen time and a child’s fine motor skills, sensory processing, visual-motor integration, and play skills. It was found that there were negative relationships between a child’s total screen time and the following skills: bilateral coordination, visual-motor integration, sensory processing and overall fine motor skills. Clinicians are now encouraging children and parents to pursue dynamic activities and active engagement in order to offset the potential effects of screen time.
* While some experts warn that screen time should be minimized, it is not without its potential. There are certain apps that can be incorporated into your child’s fine motor development. iPad applications that require specific motor skills and finger movements in order to accomplish tasks have been found to improve a child’s performance in their everyday activities.
* Studies have shown that there is a link between parts of a child’s cognitive development and their fine motor skills. Specifically, a child’s lexical processing, which refers to their vocabulary skills and their application, has been enhanced through fine motor activities.
* Early learning often emphasizes that children should develop their skills in literacy and numbers, sometimes at the expense of other developmental areas, including fine motor skills. Recent studies have shown that a child’s motor proficiency had significant impact on their mathematical studies. Fine motor skills are also highly predictive of a child’s reading ability and math skills.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?**

Fine motor skills are just as important to your child as their ability to read, write and work with numbers. In fact, those same fine motor skills can even help your child with those academic skills. Fine motor skills allow your child to explore, interact, discover, and control their environment and all that is in it. It’s just as important as all other aspects of a child’s education. Use any of the suggested activities provided as a way of playing with your child and encouraging the development of their fine motor skills!

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