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Embodied Emotions: The Hand is the Visible Part of the Heart. Hand Games and Finger Exercises for both Old and Young

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Embodied Emotions: The Hand is the Visible Part of the Heart. Hand Games and Finger Exercises for both Old and Young

Soili Perkiö

*Our actions, especially those performed with our hands, reflect our
inner feelings
intentions
and emotions*

You'll need warm hands and a warm heart when you touch babies, children, or the elderly. Finger games are an excellent way to develop children's brains and activate the memory and brain function of the elderly. What could be more important and joyful than a shared play between children and grandparents?

Large areas of the brain are activated by the movements of the hands and fingers. Brain cells are generated throughout life, but they die if not nourished with small tasks. Combinations of music, rhymes, and movement are nourishment for the brain.

In ancient cultures, various methods were used to achieve balance and peace. When greeting with hands clasped together, a closed energy field is formed, within which we can peacefully receive another.

Balance and peace are already present in the movements of the hands. In India, mudras—movements where the positions of the hands and fingers are key—have been used to treat memory, concentration, and various illnesses. Through the positioning of the fingers, we connect to the natural flow that exists within all of us.

In China, people practise traditional morning exercises in parks, and after the calm movements, they can also engage in Chinese finger exercises. This brings flowing energy to our fingers, while at the same time strengthening our inner peace.

Hands weave us together into the chain of generations

Anu Jansson is the director of of Development and Participation for The Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older Adults. She discusses the importance of shared playful moments between generations:

Hands bring us closer to one another. The joyful moments and shared experiences between young and old create a bond across ages and generations, allowing everyone to learn from each other. Meanwhile, the warmth of touch promotes the release of oxytocin, a hormone essential for building attachment relationships, especially in children, for example.

Meaningful togetherness and the joy of play strengthen our social relationships and help prevent loneliness. These are all important for our well-being, as many extensive studies have shown that loneliness, for instance, has a negative impact on health. From the perspective of a gerontologist, rhymes, reading together and traditional

finger games are an excellent way to make sense of life's course; they can take us to history and memories, ground us in the present moment, and open our view far into the future.

Games are also a natural way to connect people of different ages. Through creativity and play, we renew ourselves, no matter our age. Through traditions, we also come to understand something about the fleeting nature of life and the importance of passing on experiences and knowledge to younger generations.

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Five hundred-year-old thumb and other little guys

The Finnish language has many different names for fingers. They can be humorous, affectionate, or functional, related to the role of the finger. The following section explains the history of finger names.

Many body part names are part of the thousands-of-years-old vocabulary of the Finnish language. The term *peukalo* (thumb) has been known for over 500 years. The thumb is a very special finger, and it works differently from the other fingers. The thumb with index finger picks up small things with a precise pincer grip. You can use your index finger to pick your nose! But then you'll get scolded: it's a bad habit. In the past, in Northern Finland, the index finger was called the "nose finger." In Ostrobothnia, it was called the "licking finger." Many likely collected the last delicious drop of cake batter with their licking finger. You can also use your index finger to point out what's ahead.

The middle finger is the longest, and its many names come from that fact, such as *lankamanni* (yarnman), *oltermanni* (the village elder), or *pitkäheikki* (long Heikki). The middle finger was also once used to play a finger-hook game, so in Kainuu, it was called *koukkusormi* (hook finger), even if it was perfectly straight.

It was once believed that the ring finger held much healing and protective power. That's why its name was kept secret; it was simply called "nameless" (*nimetön*). There's a blood vessel between the little finger and the ring finger, which was considered a suitable spot for bloodletting to cure diseases. It was also believed that a nerve ran directly from the ring finger to the heart, and wearing a gold ring would further strengthen its protective power. The name *kultaralli* (golden rally) was used only in finger rhymes.

It is said that a spoiled child wraps their parents around their little finger. The little finger was once called sakarisormi (little hook finger), and it is indeed a small hook on the hand, also known as pikkulipi and piippanen—a sweet-looking little bird pikilintu.

The origin of finger rhymes can be traced back to Latin verses, which spread across Europe during the Middle Ages. Some came to Finland from neighbouring countries, others from farther away. The roots of this playful tradition may go back a very long time.



You can touch a small child's fingers while naming each finger. An older child can point to their own fingers or an adult's fingers while reciting a rhyme. The fingers can also take turns "bowing" or be tapped against each other.

Exploring and feeling your hand with awareness in three different ways: skin-bones-muscles

1. Look at the lines on the palm of your hand, draw them, touch your skin in different ways
SKIN
2. Gently press your hands and feel the underlying bones and joints – how do they move
BONES
3. Make fists, stretch your fingers, feel the muscles working

ONKO KOIRA KOTONA

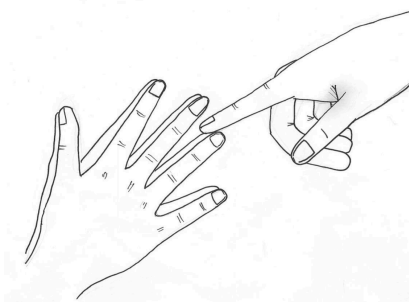
Is the Dog at home?

Onko Koira kotona?

trad. Finland trad. Finland

Percussion

On - ko Koi - ra ko - to - na?

Traditional game:

Two players. One puts his/her fingertips together and the other places a finger in the in-between spaces, with each hole asking the question "Is the Dog at home?".

Q: Onko Koira kotona? Is the Dog at home?

A: *Miesten kanssa mettällä* With the men in the forest

Q: Onko Koira kotona? Is the Dog at home?

A: *Naisten kanssa navetassa* With the women in the barn

Q: Onko Koira kotona? Is the Dog at home?

A: *Lasten kanssa leikkimässä* Playing with the children

Q: Onko Koira kotona? Is the Dog at home?

A: *HAU!* Hau! (Woof!)

HAU: A tries to catch the Q's finger in between his/her fingers while barking "Woof!"

You can improvise the answers

Is the Dog at home?

- No he's in the garden
- No no, he went to the library
- No he's at the pool..
- Woof woof woof!

1. You can play the game with or without a rhythm
2. You can mime the answers to your partner or with the group - the other ones have to guess where the dog is
3. You can question and answer with an instrument.

For videos of the game and other related ideas go to

<https://nordicsounds.info/app/#/0/search/details/7>

Story of the finger names in Finnish:

Viisisataa vuotta vanha peukku ja muut pikku äijät

Monet ruumiinosien nimet kuuluvat tuhansia vuosia vanhaan suomen kielen sanastoon. Peukalo-nimitys on tunnettu yli 500 vuotta. Peukalo on aivan erityinen sormi ja se toimiikin toisella tavalla kuin muut sormet. Peukalo ei ole keskellä kämmentä, vaan se poimii pieniä asioita tarkalla pinsettiotteella.

Etusormella voi kaivaa nenää! Mutta silloin saa torut: se on huono tapa. Ennen Pohjois-Suomessa sanottiin etusormea nenäsormeksi. Pohjanmaalla sitä sanottiin nuolusormeksi. Varmaan moni sai nuolusormella talteen kakkutaikin viimeisen herkkupisaran. Etusormella voi myös näyttää, mitä edessä on.

Keskisormi on pisin ja sen monet nimitykset johtuvat siitä, vaikkapa lankamanni, oltermanni, joka oli kylän vanhin, tai pitkäheikki. Keskisormella on vedetty ennen myös sormikoukkuja ja siksi sitä Kainuussa sanottiin koukkusormeksi, vaikka se olisi ollut ihan suora.

Ennen uskottiin, että nimettömässä sormessa oli paljon parantavaa ja suojaavaa voimaa. Siksi sen nimi pidettiin salassa, sanottiin vain "nimetön". Pikkusormen ja nimettömän välissä kulkee verisuoni, joka oli sopiva kohta sairauksien parantamiseen suonta iskemällä. Uskottiin myös, että nimettömästä vei hermo suoraan sydämeen ja kultasormuksella vielä vahvistettiin suojaavaa voimaa. "Kultaralli"-nimeä käytettiin vain sormiloruissa.

Sanotaan, että hemmoteltu lapsi kietoo vanhemmat pikkusormensa ympärille. Pikkusormea sanottiin ennen sakarisormeksi ja onhan se käden pieni sakara, pikkulipi ja piippanen, hellyttävän näköinen pikku pikilintu.

Sormilorujen alkuperää löytyy latinalaisista riimeistä, jotka keskiajalla levisivät ympäri Eurooppaa. Osa on kulkenut Suomeen naapureilta, osa kauempaa. Ajallisesti tämän leikkiperinteen juuret saattavat ulottua hyvinkin kauas.



Growing slow a big strong three

Music Soili Perkiö
 lyrics Hannele Huovi,
 translation Soili Perkiö

Am G

Growing slow a big strong three, growing slow a tree... It

Am G D

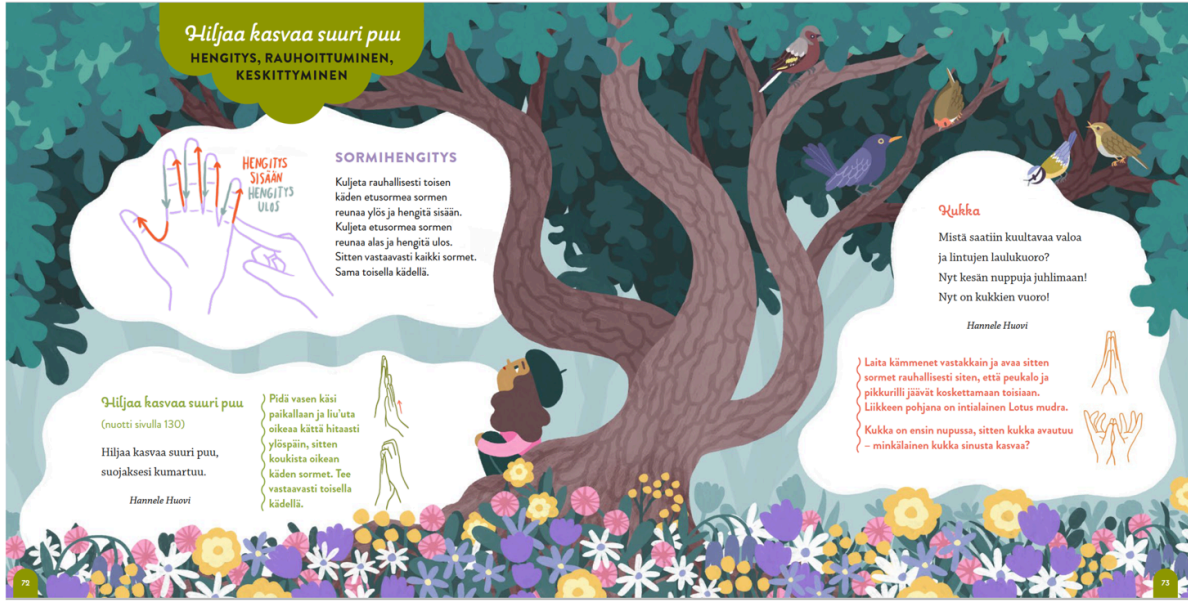
bends and pro-TECTS you and me, you and me...

Am Am/G

F Uu - uu - uu - uu - uu G

Aa - aa - aa - aa aa





From book "Onko koira kotona, Hannele Huovi - Soili Perkiö"
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[All illustrations are the copyright of the book *Onko koira Kotona, finger games and exercises for the young and old* by Hannele Huovi and Soili Perkiö published in Finnish 2024 by Tammi]



Soili Perkiö studied music education at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, and Advanced Studies in Music and Dance Education - "Orff-Schulwerk" at the Orff Institute Salzburg. She is a lecturer at the Sibelius Academy and has taught at educational conferences on all continents. She has created TV and radio programmes for children and composed music for dance, theatre, and songs for children. Soili has written over 70 books related to music education.