

## Hand Grip and Your Child's Development



I don't know about you, but I like a firm handshake? It speaks to me of confidence and trustworthiness? Yet this appears to be on the wane with a recent study in the **Journal of Hand Therapy** showing that young adults today have surprisingly less hand strength than older generations!

It has been suggested that this may be as a result of decreased time writing with pens and our increasing dependency on electronic devices. Having just recently visited a secondary school that is 'paperless' due to their proudly progressive move to 'Google Classroom', on one level I was impressed, but I did also wonder if we are already seeing signs of weaker hand grips in Millennials,

- what can we expect from younger (increasingly tech savvy/dependent) generations?
- And could this change be one of the contributing factors to the rise in learning delays and sensory issues we are increasingly seeing in schools?

### **Weak hand strength has obviously been associated with**

- difficulties holding a pencil and a decline in fine motor skills,
- problems writing letters and numbers correctly
- difficulties fastening zips or buttons
- but it is also implicated in the establishment of left or right dominance
- in lack of hand eye coordination which is needed for reading.

Even more harrowingly, in adults, a weaker grip has been associated with a wide range of health implications, with an 11-pound decrease in grip strength being linked to a **16% higher risk of dying from any cause, a 17% higher risk of dying from heart disease, a 9% higher risk of stroke and a 7% higher risk of heart attack.** Interestingly grip strength was found to be a better predictor of death or cardiovascular disease than blood pressure! (Prospective Urban and Rural Epidemiological study published in The Lancet)

Grip strength and the building blocks for handwriting begin with an infant reaching for and grasping different objects.

Their hands, fingers, wrists and elbows become stronger and stronger and the palmer grasp develops which with age should transition into the pincer grip needed to hold a pencil correctly and write.

Research has shown that as well as hand writing and pencil grip helping to develop your child's hand strength and fine motor skills can **help ignite the left side of the brain** for higher learning processes like **organisation, completing tasks, remembering details** and facts, **emotional control, speech and language**, expressive **communication** and much more.

If the brain fails to transition from right-brained learning to left-brained learning children become more emotional and less logical.

It is suggested that this may be one of the reasons why teachers and parents are reporting more attention issues in the classroom, sensory struggles, **anxiety, emotional issues and meltdowns**.



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