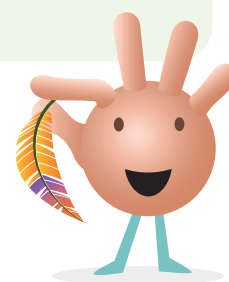


TICKLE TOUCH & HUGS

Platonic positive touch and hugs help healing happen and encourage respect and the development of empathy. Children learn important emotional centres held in the body and learn new ways to release and move emotion out of the body boosting the immune system, calming the nervous system and lowering stress. Learn through storytelling, games and through self massage and group massage.



Physical contact distinguishes humans from other animals and we need kind and gentle touch to develop socially, developmentally and to thrive.

There has been lots of research looking at the positive benefits of light and kind touch ranging from a warm handshake, sympathetic or friendly hug, an acknowledgement with a pat on the back, reflexology and massage and we are seeing, incredible emotional and physical health benefits that come from platonic touch. Touch is truly fundamental to human communication, bonding, and health.

When I m feeling low, sad, angry or upset there is nothing like the power of a huge bear hug to help my body feel better, and it is a joy to give a hug to those in my life who sometimes need one too. Hugs help heal, but it needs to be right type of hug for the right person and delivered at just the right time.

Fresh Little Minds Programmes include workshops on exploring a world of hugs, children absolutely love their hug workshops there are many wonderful scientific benefits of a warmly received hug. Not only are they good for helping us feel better but as it turns out they are essential for our growth, they contribute to our happiness, they cultivate good physical health and they make us more resilient.

HUGS HELP BRAINS AND BODIES GROW

Skin contact, or physical touch such as hugging, is one of the most important stimulation required to grow a healthy brain and a strong body. Hugging produces oxytocin which produces several growth hormones. The nurturing touch of a hug can enhance a child's growth and the absence of a hug results in failure-to-thrive.

HUGGING HELPS HEALING AND HEALTH



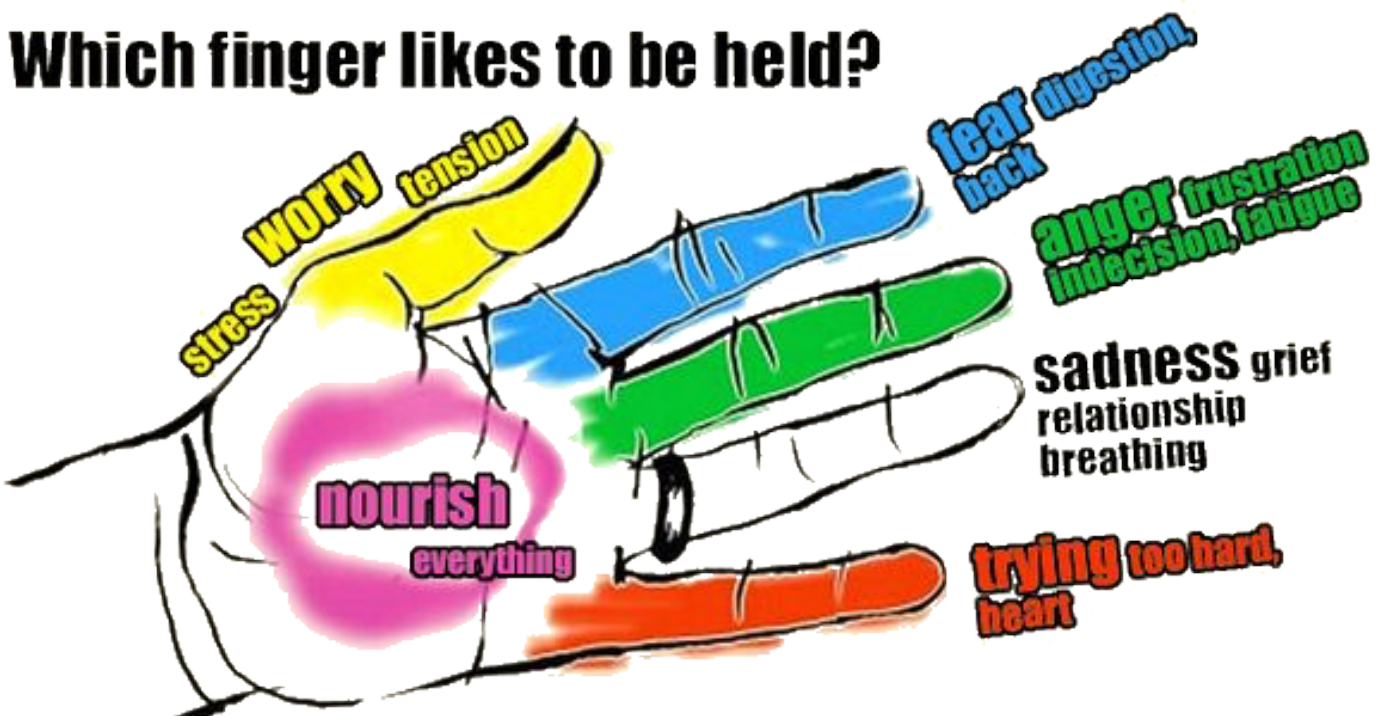
During distress, high level of cortisol is released through the body and can result in toxic stress which negatively affects a child’s immune system, and emotional health. When a child cannot self regulate a hug from someone else they trust can help them regulate. Hugs trigger the release of oxytocin which lowers the level of stress hormone and prevents and repairs negative and harmful effects.

HUGS HELP HAPPINESS

Hugs boost optimism, self-esteem and confidence. When hugged children feel loved which increases trust, reduces fear and improves relationships.

Children are also taught the basic principles of reflexology which has long established the links with our hands and the different emotions that we experience. Children are taught quick and easy techniques to sooth how they are feeling which can be very empowering for them in a fast paced and overwhelming world.

Which finger likes to be held?



SOME SCIENCE ON TOUCH

Physical touch activates the brain's orbitofrontal cortex, linked to feelings of reward and compassion through activating the body’s vagus nerve. Studies show that a simple touch can trigger release of oxytocin and our skin contains receptors that directly elicit emotional responses. Touch helps to bond people together and is a powerful tool for building trust in group settings. Basic warm touch calms cardiovascular stress and there is evidence that shows that teams whose players touch each other more win more games. Hugs or handshakes are likely to cause the release oxytocin, which increases the chances that a person will treat you with more kindness and acceptance.

Physical touch is also connected to improved health outcomes, women who receive more hugs from their partners have lower heart rates and blood pressure: “Hugs strengthen the immune system...The gentle pressure on the sternum and the emotional charge this creates activates the Solar Plexus Chakra. This stimulates the thymus gland, which regulates and balances the body’s production of white blood cells, which keeps you healthy and disease free.” Even something as simple as eye contact and a pat on the back or arm from the doctor has been linked to an increase in the survival rate of patients with complex diseases.

Touch helps children engage and learn. When teachers touch students platonically, it is reported to make children three times more likely to speak up in class or feel more positive about the environment they are learning in.

But in a tech-saturated, child protection aware world, there are fewer adults confident in interacting with children through kind, platonic, light touch. It is becoming rarer and so within the Fresh Little Minds Programmes we actively incorporate appropriate light touch which we call ‘tickle touch and hugs’ into our workshops through storytelling, fun exercises, light group work and personal massage.

