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Finger painting it's not just for kids anymore

By Cathy Downs

If you were born during the last 70 years or so, you probably have childhood memories of sitting at a little table, dipping your fingers into thick, brightly colored paint and noodling your way around a sheet of smooth, shiny paper. These paintings were usually formless squiggles, blobs and lines created from a child's carefree lack of inhibition.But finger-painting isnt just for children.

North Carolina native Ruth Faison Shaw developed a finger-painting method that provides an environment where people of all ages and abilities can experience the joy and freedom of self-expression.

This self-expression can even be healing when theres a need or desire to be healed, according to Bryan Carey, a practitioner and teacher of the finger-painting technique pioneered by Shaw and founder and director of the Shaw School and Studio in Durham.

Finger-painting was a long-forgotten art form used by ancient peoples in North America, China and Europe when Shaw reintroduced it to the world in 1931. Born in 1888 in Kenansville, Shaw taught school in the U.S. and Europe and opened the Shaw School in Rome in the early 1920s.

One of Shaw's students, Leonardo, was the catalyst for her discovery. Shaw gave Leonardo a bottle of iodine for a cut on his finger and sent him to the bathroom. When he didn't return, she found him smearing the iodine on the bathroom walls. Shaw chose to see the mess as artistic creativity.

Shaw and her students spent the next five years experimenting with various materials to create a nontoxic substance children could use. She had her formula patented, and a variant is still sold today.

Shaw's colleague, John Thomas Payne, an artist-psychologist, learned Shaw's methods and philosophy and carried on her work after she died in 1969.

Carey met Payne in 1985 at an exhibit of Shaw's paintings and felt an immediate connection to her method. He apprenticed with Payne for seven years, then spent another seven years studying Shaw, her artistic vocabulary and method.



Shaws Philosophy, Method

Shaw taught life principles through finger-painting, Carey explains. The art form is a philosophy in action, he says, and she based her technique on the natural cycle of life. It teaches that we live in a world of cause and effect: first, preparation; second, creation; third, completion," Carey says. "Its a cyclical process — by cleaning up, we prepare for the next phase."

Shaw's method involves the whole body in a dance she described as opening the doors of imagination. She used an elbow-high table and taught students to put one hand behind their back, letting their whole body – not just their fingers – move the paint around the paper.

"Finger-painting is about the movement, and through the movement is the realization of the freedom of expression," Carey says. "In this process, you paint what you feel in addition to what you see."

Carey describes the paintings as picture-story records. "First, the picture is created; then a story is written about the picture," he says. Titling the painting and writing a story tells something about the person's inside struggle, joy or fear, explains Jennifer Falchi, Carey's protégé. For children, and even adults, listening to the story and displaying the picture validates the feelings represented in the painting, she says.

A Healing Art

Shaw recognized the therapeutic qualities of finger-painting to help children and adults express their emotions when words are not enough. Carey and Falchi hold workshops at state and nonprofit agencies that help adults and children with mental illness or emotional challenges.

Finger-painting is a catharsis for people with mental illness because they work with the past, the present and the anticipated future, Carey says. Falchi also notes that finger-painting can help children and teens settle down within five minutes. There's an interesting connection between the physical act of touching the paint and connecting with something important inside themselves, she says.

Aileen Clougherty, a teacher at the Central Park School for Children in Durham, says her kindergartners loved Careys demon stration last year. "They were very excited watching the colors mix and feeling the different textures," Clougherty says. "It was great to see how the textures were created."

Clougherty points out that finger-painting uses many senses. "Children are very tactile beings, and they explored the paint. They forgot the paper, and at one point, some of them ran the paint up their arms," she says. In fact, she says, the children were more interested in the process than the finished product.

Finger-painting also has a spiritual component. Carey says that, like yoga, finger-painting is a physical and spiritual opening up that helps you transcend and reach a different place within yourself, allowing you to explore body, mind and soul



The Rev. WonGong So, of the Won-Buddhism Meditation Temple in Chapel Hill, participated in a workshop led by Carey last summer. "Finger-painting can be a way to build rapport and connection with yourself and others, exploring feelings without words or language," WonGong says. "Even a beginner can jump in and explore and express their creativity."

She believes that finger-painting has great potential for spiritual and psychological healing. "It's a good activity to boost self-esteem to fully express yourself. You can do it over and over again and see what different things come out," she says. "It's a very good way to see how you're feeling about yourself and about your expression of it.

"Beyond your current feelings and emotions, eventually you may find a way to express your true self through this finger-painting meditation," she adds.

Grown up finger painting: Artist creates stunning images with her fingers

Mary Bowerman, USA Today Network

Brooklyn artist Iris Scott creates detailed works of art using an elementary technique: finger painting.

Scotts finger paintings, which range from portrait's of pets to landscapes, are created in a process she describes as bridging the gap between sculpture and painting.

"Its sort of like Play-Doh; I grab the paint and sculpt it on," she said. "There is nothing in between the canvas and me. There is no paintbrush."

Scott, who was traditionally trained in watercolor and acrylics, said she began finger painting by accident in 2010 while living in Taiwan. After painting one day, Scott didnt wash her brushes. So, they became unusable.

"I ended up finishing a painting with my fingertips and looked at it and thought, 'Oh my God, why is no one else doing this." she said.

Iris Scott creates stunning images with finger painting. A finger painting creation by Brooklyn-based artist Iris Scott. Iris Scott

Today, Scott continues to finger paint, armed only with a pair of acrylic gloves to protect her skin from the paint. Her paintings, which have picked up in popularity, range in sale from \$30,000 for a 128-inchwide painting entitled

Jake the Giant, to prints, which range from \$60 to several hundred.

Adult finger painting also seems to be picking up in popularity, according to Scott.



"You can use oil, acrylic anything you want," she said. "Its traditionally cheap paint in classrooms for children, but if you apply fancy thick oils to this technique, the sky is the limit."





Effects of Tactile Sensations during Finger Painting on Mindfulness, Emotions, and Scope of Attention



Research has shown that creative performance, such as painting, influences affective and cognitive processes. Yet little is known about how tactile sensations experienced during painting determine what individuals feel and how they think while they create.

Based on prior research, finger painting (compared to brush painting) was expected to generate more tactile sensations, enhance state mindfulness, and broaden the scope of attention.

An effect of painting on emotional processing was also expected. Volunteers were randomly assigned to finger painting or brush painting sessions. The global-local test was used to measure scope of attention. Participants reported state mindfulness with a cued-recall rating dial method.

Automated facial expression analysis provided a continuous index of emotions. In support of the hypotheses, finger painting was related to more tactile sensations, more state mindfulness, and a broader attentional focus.

These results suggest that assigning finger painting to individuals is a viable method for improving state mindfulness and enhancing scope of attention. The effects for affective processes, however, are mixed.

More state mindfulness

Emotional & Social Benefits Of Finger Painting

Finger painting is an art that most of us have experienced in our childhood. While theres no doubt about the fun element of this activity, few people are aware of the therapeutic benefits of this art form. In this article, we will try and understand the benefits of finger painting, both for kids and adults.

How does Finger Painting Work?
For those unaware, finger painting is a simple activity that involves dipping of fingers in paint and then using fingers to create objects & shapes on a piece of paper. All you need is a table at elbow height, a few sheets of plain paper, and a few bottles of poster or water colour.

Let's take an example of making a rainbow using finger painting. To start off, one needs to place small portions of all the colours of the rainbow on a sheet of paper. Next, they should start blending and mixing all the different colours with hand. Even without any special painting talent, you'll get a nice colourful rainbow with just simple movement of hands.

Finger Painting for Kids The Approach

When engaging kids in this activity, one should try and use non-toxic paints only (if not available in the market readily, non-toxic paint can be made in the home easily). Preferably, the paint should also be edible. Also kids should be provided with a canvas in an area that can be cleaned easily; unlike adults, kids may not restrict their painting on the paper provided alone.

The Benefits:

Easy for little fingers: Kids, particularly toddlers, find it hard to hold a brush or a crayon. However, finger painting is a much easier exercise for them as they don't have to worry about the weight of a painting tool.

Improves sensory experience: Finger painting involves all major senses – visual, auditory, kinesthetic – thereby improving the sensory abilities of kids.

Development of fine motor skills: Finger painting is an excellent physical exercise as it involves the muscles of the finger and the hand as well as muscles of the shoulder, neck and the back. This makes it a good training exercise for kids before they start writing.

Recognising colours: Finger painting involves exploring a range of colours, thereby giving children ample training on colour recognition. The activity also trains kids on mixing colours and trying out new combinations for creating new colours.

Improves hand-eye co-ordination: The activity is an excellent way of improving hand eye co-ordination in kids. While the activity may sound very easy, it involves some complex hand movements.

Language and speech development:
Once a finger painting is created, children can be made to talk about their piece of art. For example, they can talk about the different colours used or the different objects they've tried to create. Additionally, finger painting provides kids with an avenue to express their feelings in a visual way and not in words, which further helps in language development.

Benefits of Finger Painting for Adults

It is a common misconception that finger painting is for children alone; rather it's an activity that can be enjoyed by adults in equal measure. Adults can use latex gloves while finger painting to avoid stains of paint on their hands. They can use either oil colour or poster colour for this activity.

The Benefits

Finger painting provides unparalleled freedom of self-expression. There's no limit to expression of feelings in this activity. All one needs to do is go all out and put all their feelings on a piece of paper by dipping their fingers in paint. While painting, one may subconsciously choose colours that reflect your emotion. For example, you may select the colour red to express your anger or green to express hope. At times you may be confused, and

the painting will help you depict your confused state of mind. Once you get your emotions on paper, you are likely to feel relieved and rejuvenated.

Healing Experience

In modern times, most people find it hard to cope up with stress. Finger-painting can be an excellent stress-reliever. The sheer experience of using your fingers to create something fresh and new can be very uplifting emotionally and psychologically.

Improves Concentration

Whether it's kids or adults, finger painting is a highly engaging and involving activity that improves concentration. As all the focus is directed towards a small sheet of paper, it is a welcome change in today's times where the mind is occupied with multiple things at any point.

Build Rapport and Connection

When a group of people (whether kids or adults) assemble for an exercise of finger painting, it can be a great way of creating a bond between the group. Art and painting parties are a popular concept the west. Organisations can also use finger painting as a teambuilding activity by making participants paint together on a large canvas.

Final Thoughts

To conclude, finger painting is a highly beneficial pastime, both for kids and adults. The activity can be done individually as well as in groups.

So what are you waiting for? Plan a finger-painting session soon, and experience the joy.



The World's Best Finger Painter Wants You To Stop Praising Your Kid

When you think of finger painting, you likely imagine a kindergarten classroom filled with 5-year-olds mindlessly smudging colors everywhere except their canvas.

Its messy. Its chaotic. Its a scene that would make even Jackson Pollack call time-out. What you probably dont think of is Iris Scott, but you should. An artistic anomaly, the 33-year-old artist is the most prolific finger painter in the world, having built a career out of creating works of fine art with nothing but oil paint and her two hands. Finger painting is often seen as asloppy and abstract pursuit, but

Iris' work is meticulous and vibrant; upon first glance it's hard to believe it's been done without a brush. Iris didn't start with fingers alone: she built up a base of techniques in college before stumbling across the digit-friendly medium while studying in Taiwan. She adored the freedom the artform offered and decided to pursue it full time. Given Scott's unique skillset makes, it only made sense to ask her

For her fingerpainting tips. Heres how she suggests transforming your kids in master manipulators of paint.

Start With a Pencil and Ruler

Finger painting might be something most kids try in the age range of 3-5, but it's actually a pretty complex art form. If your kid wants to get into it, Iris suggests they start with something simple: grab a pencil and learn to draw.

"Harnessing a graphite pencil versus moving paints directly with your fingers is a chasm of difference." In other words, it teaches your kid control. Scott also emphasizes using a ruler to teach your kid how to make purposeful, exact movements. "For drawing, the ruler is like training wheels. You can eventually move past it, but it helps your learn."

Just Blue It

Picasso had a Blue Period and, according to Iris, so should your kids. She says the best finger painting starter kit is a whole lot of blue paint and some good old-fashioned reckless abandon. "Give them

blue and let them go wild. Get different shades," she says. "Whatever mess they make, it'll turn out to be a beautiful, water-y abstract painting. Then you can help them develop their skills if that's what they want to do."

Steve Jobs once said that Pablo Picasso once said, "Good artists copy. Great artists steal." Ironically, Picasso may have stolen that quote, but, regardless, Iris agrees that copying is important for art. And while your kid may want to immediately get into creating original works of art that will one day hang in museums or living rooms of rich people who want their

friends to know they like art, you're going to want to encourage your kid to start by trying to imitate simple, straightforward stuff.

"Encourage them to copy," Iris insists
"That's what the professionals do. Copying
gets a bad rap. We create individual pieces, but we also trace and copy. For kids,
especially, it teaches form and technique."

Find the Right and Wrong in Art

Art may be subjective, but Iris insists it's not as objective as people think. And it's especially not as subjective as parents pretend it is when their kids mess up. "If your kid was learning math, and they told you 2+2=5, you wouldn't say, 'What a terrific answer! You're so unique!'"

Iris says that despite what most parents may think, kids like seeing tangible improvement in their work. Art can obviously be left up to individual interpretation, but that doesn't mean there isn't right or wrong. Iris says, "Art can get abstract, but first they need to know how to draw."

Don't Give Out False Praise

Iris understands that parents want encourage their kids to have confidence to pursue their passions, and so they'll often tell their kid everything they do is amazing. But Iris says that approach is "pure crap."

"Kids are smart. They can sense hollow praise," she says. "If they are trying to draw a dog, and it's way off, it doesn't help to say it's 'modern' or 'cool.'"

Iris obviously isn't saying you should mock your kid or discourage them, and they do deserve credit for trying. But kids appreciate it when people are honest about where they can improve their work.





How to Use Finger Painting to Revoke Your Inner Child and Release Your Daily Stress



All sorts of fine arts have been used as excellent tools for stress relief for many years now.

The healing properties of colors have been studied and proven, and many psychologists tend to recommend the usage of coloring pages or mandala coloring as a technique for relaxation, stress relief, and even meditation.

Many of us had forgotten the awesome feeling we had when we were children when coloring was our daily activity. Children can express various emotions and talents while coloring or painting.

One of the most creative and open-minded techniques is the so-called finger painting. It is fun to perform, and at the same time, has some serious therapeutic properties.

Without any restrictions, children dip their fingers and palms in various paints and create all sorts of abstract and figural artworks. They don't care for the rules of perspective, proportions and other obstacles that make many adults quit enjoying the art creation.

This fact is the reason why children benefit from relaxing and healing art techniques. But, if we revoke our inner child and remember how great is just to create whatever your fingers lead you to create, then we might find the secret to everyday stress relief and better feeling.

Finger painting was officially introduced to the world of adult art education by American educator Ruth Faison Shaw in the 1930ties.

This great teacher and artist worked as an adviser to the Department of Psychiatry at Memorial Hospital at the University of North Carolina. Together with the psychologist John Thomas Payne, she has proven that finger painting has great healing properties and can serve as relaxation and stress relieving medium, as well as depression and anxiety therapy.

So, how can you implement this excellent technique to your everyday relaxation routine?

1. Forget the prejudices and obstacles that will make you quit.

Everybody knows how to draw and paint. Figural painting is not the only appreciated art movement. Remember that some of the greatest artworks are abstract. Just let go and create whatever your fingers want.

- 2. Don't worry if things get messy. Modern water-based colors are washable. You can wear old clothes and protect your working space with a large sheet of plastic wrap that you use for wall painting. Make enough of free space so that you can perform wider movements and even dance while painting.
- 3. In order to revoke your inner child, put on some favorite music that you enjoyed as a teenager.

The music will make a gate for the inner child to come out. Eating a small amount of chocolate before starting can also help. If you are worried about sugar intake, there are sugar-free chocolates. What's important here is that your taste buds give the signal to your brain to release the childish happiness.

4. Don't judge yourself and compare to other artists.

Your finger-painted emotions are unique, and they represent the image of your soul. Enjoy the variety of mediums. You can even create wearable art, such as t-shirts, bags, dresses by using the textile dyes.

Also, you can paint on the glass, porcelain or furniture. Your creativity will flourish once you start feeling free of any prejudices.



HERE ARE 10 REASONS TO LOVE FINGER PAINTING WHATEVER YOUR AGE.

1. IT IS FUN

First and foremost – let's do the activity for the sake of it, not because we have to. Activities should be fun. Childhood and even adulthood should have lots of fun moments— No plan, no end result, just fun!

2. BACK TO COLOUR MIXING

Finger painting can be a great way for kids to colour mix. Learning by doing has proven benefits and finger painting can help children take time to observe the swirling colours and discuss the new hues made. Once kids know their colours — colour mixing can take on a whole new level as colours mixed can be discussed in different ways. New colours named by how light or dark they are e.g. Is it just blue or midnight blue or maybe sky blue? New names for colours can be made too. Recently Mr. O named a colour "Captain America blue."

3. IT'S CREATIVE

Life seems so results driven now. Grading children for subjects like art and music in primary school has no benefit. Commenting on the progress of skills learned is different and positive feedback can really aid skill development. How can anyone fail art in primary school? Isn't it about perspective? We seem programmed to ask closed questions and inflict this on our children, instead of being open to the possibly that not everything has to be beautiful or something e.g. a cat. Can't it just be a splodge? Finger painting is process over product. Older children can gain so much satisfaction from sinking their hands into paint and having nowhere to go and nothing to do — some finger prints, a pattern, a mess, or a handprint, it can simply be an experience. Creativity comes from freedom to just be. Finger painting is an exploratory process.

4. DEVELOPS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Painting is a great group activity. Talking about the colours mixed and what the splodges, fingerprints, handprints may be or could turn into is a great creative way to talk about the process.

5. PROMOTES SOCIAL SKILLS

In most art and craft activities equipment needs to be shared. As equipment is shared children learn over time that using their words is beneficial and collaboration begins, turn taking happens and as the adult in charge you can model correct words and behaviour.

6. IMPROVES FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Squishing paint through your fingers can strengthen hand and finger muscles, thus improving the pincer grip and handwriting in the long run. Flexing your fingers and stretching them as you make your fingerprints, splodges and handprints gives the tiny muscles in your hands and wrists a good work-out.

7. EMOTIONALLY SOOTHING

Having time to just be is a must in such a busy world. Finger painting is often used in Art Therapy as a method to help people express their compressed emotions when words are not enough. Finger painting is all about self-expression and with that comes freedom. The freedom to create and freedom to be yourself even if you cannot find your words. Finger painting is an age old art form, however, it is Ruth Faison Shaw who is credited with the discovery that finger painting can aid mental health and is one of the founders of Art Therapy. The story goes that whilst running a school for English speaking children in Rome she sent a young boy to the bathroom to cleanse his cut finger with iodine, Shaw discovered the boy using the iodine to draw on the tile walls with his fingers instead. The hands, she realized were a natural medium for expression.

8. HAND EYE COORDINATION AND CONTROL

Hand eye coordination is the ability of the eyes to guide the hand movements. Watching your hands go from paint to paper and remembering where they have just been and where you want them to go is a collection of many skills, that as adults we just take for granted. Finger painting naturally teaches children to manipulate their hands and eyes together, without the inclusion of added equipment to hinder progress.

9. STIMULATES SPACIAL AWARENESS

Spacial awareness is the ability to be aware of oneself in space. Moving your fingers around the page and directing your hands to go exactly where you want them to go is a skill in itself. What we think we can do is not exactly what we can achieve at times? Over time, children learn how to manipulate their own bodies to do what they want and can control their own movements more readily.

10. IT IS THERAPEUTIC

Finger painting is all about the sensory experience, rather than the art made. That's not to say sensational art cannot be made by finger painting, but the focus is on the experience. Finger painting is a great tactile experience as it stimulates the senses of touching/feeling, sight and smell and can be relaxing- in most cases! Just like squeezing playdough or sieving sand. The act of squishing the paint through your fingers and onto your hands can be therapeutic and cause relaxation. According to a recent paper published in Creativity Research Journal, finger painting can improve mindfulness and enhance attention. As schools hurtle towards being more academic activities such as finger painting, art/craft and exploratory play are a must for any older child as well as young children. Down time that is not structured and technology free is proven to make us all feel happier, more relaxed and healthier.



Let's Get Those Hands Dirty: The Benefits of Finger Painting and Parkinson's Disease

By: Saba Shahid, M.S.

There is something about having paint on your finger tips that allows you to be free and leaves you without worries. Most adults run when they hear the words "finger painting." However, with a little bit of encouragement, once in the groove people with Parkinson's disease enjoy this art activity and create beautiful pieces! Continue reading to find out why finger painting can be a fun experience to enhance your creativity:

- 1. It is soothing: As you move your hands throughout the canvas, your fingers act as the brush. Your mind decides what section of the canvas you should go to next. You're focused on nothing else but the canvas in front of you. The texture of the paint on your hands puts you in a soothing emotional state.
- 2. Stimulate your senses: Touch, sight, hearing... all three of these senses are actively engaging to give you the full experience of completing your masterpiece while you finger paint. Who would have thought that finger painting can help give you a full body experience!

- 3. Develop fine motor skills: Unconsciously, you are developing your motor skills by moving your arms, hands, and fingers. When finger painting we tend to move our hands and fingers in ways that we would not normally do if we were holding a paint brush. These movements help strengthen your hands and fingers developing your fine motor skills. This is also a time where you can take advantage of the hand tremors you experience to help you create a texture filled background!
- 4. You are allowed to get messy: This is probably one of a handful of activities you can do without worrying about making a mess! Finger painting allows you to be free in your approach, your mind is in control, and without any instructions you unleash your creativity and unconsciously start bringing your canvas alive through color.
- 5. You make music: Finger painting helps you bring together two forms of art-painting and music! Tapping your fingers, one by one, two by two, or alternating them in different ways all creates a different sound. When you finger paint in a group setting it is really amazing to hear the different sounds that are produced when people are using different finger movements to transfer the paint onto their canvas.

Parkinson's Disease effects more than 200,000 people a year.



The average age of someone diagnosed with Parkinson's disease is 56. Around 4 percent of Parkinson's patients are diagnosed before the age of 50 and it's considered young-onset if diagnosed before the age of 40.



Article 1:

Finger-Painting it's not just for kids anymore

Source:

https://www.wral.com/lifestyles/family/sto-ry/2482242/

Article 2:

Grown up finger painting: artist creates stunning images with her fingers

Source:

https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/09/27/artist-finger-painting-adult-paintings-iris-scott-dog-paintings-people-landscapes/91159812/

Article 3:

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1 080/10400419.2016.1189769

Source:

Effects of Tactile Sensations during Finger Painting on Mindfulness, Emotions, and Scope of Attention

Article 4:

Emotional & Social Benefits Of Finger Painting

Source:

https://liveyourpassion.in/art/learn/ Get-started/Emotional---Social-Benefits-of-Finger-Painting-290



Article 5:

The World's Best Finger Painter Wants You To Stop Praising Your Kid

Source:

https://www.fatherly.com/play/overqualified-expert-5-finger-painting-tips-iris-scott/

Article 6:

How to Use Finger Painting to Revoke Your Inner Child and Release Your Daily Stress

Source:

https://www.lifeadvancer.com/finger-painting-stress



Article 7: 10 Reasons to love finger painting

Source: https://tinystepsmakebigstrides.com/2017/06/23/10-reasons-to-love-finger-painting/



Article 8: Lets get those hands dirty the benefits of finger painting and parkinsons disease

Source: https://smilethroughart.word-press.com/2016/02/16/lets-get-those-hands-dirty-the-benefits-of-finger-painting-and-parkinsons-disease-2/

