

6. Qui-qui birds and Little squirrels

The following two exercises are lovely little movements that are especially delightful for little children who are just developing small motor skills! People who experience arthritis in the hands also find them helpful.

The qui-qui exercise is a light and lively exercise that aims specifically to develop agility and dexterity in the fingers.

Imagine that your rod is a tree branch, that you are holding horizontally in front of you. A flock of birds flies onto the rod, and the little birds dance up and down on the rod.

Hold the rod with both hands at shoulder height. Hold the rod balanced on your thumbs, with your fingers on top of the rods. Let each finger tap the rod, one by one. You can practice with first one hand and then the other, and then pair your hands.

Learn to move your fingers as fast as possible, so that they are practically dancing on the rod.

Take it the next step by quickly rotating your wrists so that your fingers are underneath the rod instead of on top. Dance your fingers agilely underneath the rod.

Now learn to move so quickly and gracefully that your fingers dance above the rod and then below, above and below, so fast that the rod seems to hover weightlessly in space as your fingers dance around it.

The “Little Squirrels” strengthens the experience of standing upright and holding the vertical axis.

Imagine that your rod is a tree, and hold it upright. Your hands are two little squirrels that want to chase each other up the tree. One begins at the bottom of the tree, gripping the rod. The other squirrel jumps over the first, tagging it on the way up: this means, you grasp the rod with the other hand, just above the first hand. Hand over hand, your squirrels chase each other up the trunk of the tree, as you hold it firmly in your grip, not allowing it to sway.

You can also hold the rod horizontally, and let the squirrely jump over one another, from side to side. Begin with your hands next to each other, and then let the right hand, the first squirrel “jump over” the other. Then cross the left over right. Continue with right over left, left over right, and lightly and quickly as you can.

Next, let the right hand cross under the rod and grasp it from below. Then the left hand crosses under the right and also grasps the rod from below. Continue with right under left, left under right, lightly and quickly.

You can take this to the next level by then crossing one leg over the other at the same time that you cross your hands! Right over left, left over right, or right behind left, left behind right. This creates a light and lively coordination game!