

My Hands - Poor Fine Motor Skills



By [Matt Allen G](#) June 16, 2016 5 min read

I used to always work with my hands; I was the kind of kid who liked to take things apart to find out how they worked. I always wanted my *own* tools even if it was just a screwdriver! As I grew older I became a DIY guy and worked on all sorts of projects around the house, I worked on motorcycles, cars, computers, everything! I also used my hands for art; I drew from an early age, I eventually started sculpting, painting (a bit) and of course playing music. Even though I was aware that I used my hands for so much I really had no idea how much fine motor skill was needed for simple, *mundane*, everyday life until I started losing function in my hands after being [diagnosed with MS!](#)

The first thing I noticed

The first thing I noticed starting to go was my ability to play music. I played the piano and the guitar, so that is *a lot* of finger work. On the piano, I would notice myself pressing the edge of the key I *wanted* to hit and the edge of the key next to it. It's like where I *thought* the center of the key was in my head was not where it actually was in time and space. This is actually known as proprioception, the ability to tell where your limbs are in time and space relative to your own body. If you have poor proprioception then when your doctor asks you to close your eyes, extend both arms out and touch your nose with your finger you might *feel* like your finger is on a collision course with the tip of your nose but end up poking the side, your eye or maybe your cheek. This is not always *specifically* what they are looking for with this test, but this is one thing it can tell you.¹

So I started *really* having to look at my hands while I played either the piano or guitar so I could make sure they were in the right spot. Eventually, it became a simple fine motor issue; my fingers *could not* move the way I needed them to or as fast as I was telling them to. First I said goodbye to the guitar and eventually I could no longer press the keys on a piano as soft as I wanted or as quick as I wanted; everything felt really mechanical and eventually I just stopped playing, as it was becoming too difficult and just not enjoyable. *Very frustrating.*

Experiencing a major relapse

This happened over the course of *years*, but at one point I had a majorrelapse that put me into a physical rehabilitation hospital for 6 weeks. I barely had control over anything! I could not even open and close my hands at first. I had to do all sorts of exercise to gain some function back, even if it was something simple like pinching a clothespin open and clipping it onto a small metal bar. It was so difficult and I remember it being maddening, because in my head I am telling my hands and fingers exactly what to do but they just would not do it! I would be staring at my limp hand telling it to clench, but it's like the signal got lost on its way from my brain to my hand because nothing would happen. That was at its *wors,e* but so far it has never got that bad again (knock on wood), but I have *definitely* been losing function over time.

Trying to use a screwdriver while shaking

One thing that drives me *insane* is trying to use a screwdriver, that simple tool I started using as a child. I will hold the *screw* with my left hand and be holding the *screwdriver* in my right. I slowly move the screwdriver towards the screw's head but I can't keep it steady. It feels like trying to thread a needle that you are holding with pliers with a piece of thread you are also holding with pliers at arms length during an earthquake! So much shaking! I miss the screw and usually end up just wanting to toss the screwdriver as far as I can out of frustration. I have found ways *to sort of* work around this. But they don't completely make the problem go away; they only *sometimes* help *reduce* the frustration.

Typing and connecting with people is now affected

Now the issue I deal with everyday that sort of scares me. Typing. The one thing I have left that connects me to the world. It's exactly the same as the piano where I think I am about to hit one key but I actually end up hitting 2 or 3. I swear, a quarter of the time I spend writing is spent pressing "backspace" and re-attempting to type a word. I have to type *so slow* and watch the keyboard as I type, even though in the past I typed at about 85 words per minute. I really don't want to lose what fine motor skill I have left, because if I can't write I literally would not know "who I am" anymore, as in, my purpose. I would not know what to do with myself; typing is how I communicate with all the people in my life, and I really can't write by hand anymore. As far as typing, some days are better than others, just like anything else, you know how it goes.

Hand therapy is necessary but frustrating

I know there are lots of little hand exercises I can do to try to better my fine motor skills or at least keep them from getting worse. I have been to hand therapy, and it really sucks because everything you do involves trying to do something *you know* you can't do until *you eventually can*. Small, little, *meticulous* exercises; I find it so frustrating and because I am so sensitive to stress I just don't usually want to do any of them. That's even though I know I should, or else I may end up not able to zip up my own zipper on my pants again. I can handle not being able to pick up really small objects or dropping them *when I can*, but the zipper thing? That one is a big deal...

Fine motor skill issues effect us all differently

I know that fine motor issues are a major problem for most people with MS, but *obviously* this affects all of our lives differently. I have simply shared some of the main ways it affects *mine*, but I know that is only the *tip of the iceberg*. I could still write so much about all the little ways multiple sclerosis screws with my fine motor skills and how I think that all button-up shirts should be burned in a pit of hot lava. But I am just going to leave you with the things that affect my life *the most*, because most everything else is more of a "nuisance" to me. **So how have you been affected by a loss of fine motor skill? Share below!**

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