

Home Program: Mirror Therapy

The Basics

- To get the best results, you should do these exercises every day. Some people find it is better to practice twice a day for a shorter time.
- Find a quiet spot at a table that is a comfortable height to sit at with your arms on the table. A quiet area where you can focus is best
- You should take off any jewelry or watches from the 'good' hand
- Remember that you are trying to change the brain! This might be slow, and the steps may be small. But if you practice, you will see changes.
- Stop doing the mirror exercises if it makes you feel dizzy or seasick. This doesn't happen very often, but if it does, your therapist can give you other ways to work on your arm.
- Use a mirror that is big enough for you to see your arm, and has a clear reflection. No smudges or dust – that makes it easier to see!

Getting started

1. Place your weak or painful arm inside the box with the mirror facing your strong arm.
2. Make sure the mirror is placed in front of you so you can easily **see the reflection** of your strong arm clearly in the mirror.
3. Start by **looking directly at the mirror** image of your strong hand. Try to imagine that you are really seeing your other hand. This may take a minute or two, but sometimes happens quite quickly.
4. Start by gently doing the exercises your therapist has given you **with your strong hand only**. Try to focus on the image in the mirror while you do the movements. You want to imagine that your weak hand is also doing the same movements.

You should try and do different movements, making them slow and smooth. Try to work like this for _____minutes.

5. Now repeat the same exercises, but this time, try to do them with **both hands at the same time**. Keep looking at the mirror while you do the movements.

Do not do anything that produces pain. **Stop if you feel tired** or dizzy. Try to work like this for _____ minutes.

Progressing Therapy

If you started using the mirror box for 5 minutes two times every day (10 minutes total), then try to do it more often. You can also practice for longer every time, as long as you can still concentrate. This is hard work!

Make changes using any of the ideas listed below but only make one change at a time

- Listen to music at the same time. You can try to tap your fingers to the beat.
- Practice with other people in the room. This makes it harder to keep focused on the mirror.
- Try some activities using the mirror. You can do this at step 4, where you are just imagining that you are trying it with both hands. Later, you can really try to do it with both hands.
 - ✓ Press your hand on the table to put some weight on it
 - ✓ Make a fist – squeeze lightly, and then try squeezing hard.
 - ✓ Roll your hand over a ball or a can
 - ✓ Gather a few objects (pen, toothbrush, spoon, or a coffee cup) and try to pick them up and move them around. Always keep looking in the mirror! You may need someone else to help you position the objects in the same spot for both hands.
 - ✓ When you use an object, also be sure to think about the texture (metal, wood, glass, plastic) and how it feels.
 - ✓ Play with your food! Try an apple, orange or banana. Think about the texture of the skin, and the smell of the fruit.
 - ✓ Try picking up smaller things like a grape or a cracker

Mirror Box Exercises

Pick 3-4 exercises to practice before each session. Try not to look at the sheet: it is best if you stay focused on the mirror.

1. Working slowly and smoothly, bend your wrist up and down as far as you can. Keep your fingers relaxed.
2. With the hands palm down on the table and fingers gently curled, move hand side-to-side (like windshield wipers). Try to keep the fingers relaxed and work at a comfortable pace.
3. Keeping fingers relaxed, move wrists gently in a circular motion.
4. With elbows tucked in at sides or sitting on table, turn palms up to ceiling then down to the floor. Work slowly and smoothly.
5. Keeping all the other joints of the fingers straight, try to bend and straighten only at the big knuckles.
6. Make a fist and then straighten the fingers fully. Try to use as little effort as you can.
7. Spread the fingers as far apart as possible, and back together.
8. Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of each finger.

9. Touch tip of thumb to the bottom of the little finger. Bring thumb back to straight (thumbs up!)

10. Draw circles in the air with your thumb.

11. Lightly drum fingers on the tabletop.

12. Try tapping each finger one at a time. Tap it three times before moving to next finger.

Sensory Training with the Mirror Box

Use the same basic ideas as before: start with short periods of 5 minutes and work up to trying more often for a longer time. Try to do the sensory training at least twice daily. Each time you use the mirror box start with the first step and work your way through each step for 1-2 minutes. Do not move on to the next step if you find it uncomfortable.

1. With weak or painful hand behind the mirror, have a helper lightly touch different areas on the strong hand. Focus on the reflection in the mirror.
2. Have your helper touch both of your hands **in the same place, at the same time** while you focus on the mirror. Start with a light stroke, gentle tapping, gentle pressure, or touching with different textures like a Q-tip, marble, coin, toothpick, or key.
3. When you are able to feel the different types of textures, try having your assistant touch only the weak hand (hidden by the mirror). You should still be watching the mirror image, but you may find that not being able to see the touch makes it feel stronger. Focus on the feeling, and try to identify exactly where you are being touched, and what the texture is.
4. Have your helper touch you with either the lid of a pen or a big marker. Try to tell them where they touched you, AND whether it was with the large or small lid. You can do the same thing with a Q-Tip and cotton ball.
5. Try having someone stroke for about 2 inches either up or down your hand or arm behind the mirror. Try to feel if they were moving towards your fingertips, or towards your shoulder.