

Hand Stabilizers for Rolfers

by Richard Wheeler

Rolfers often work with their hands shaped in the "closed fist" configuration (see Figure 1). Experienced practitioners know this shape is susceptible to mechanical distortion, stress and pain. Pressure on the closed fist tends to over-flex knuckle joints and can drive fingernails into the palm of the hand (Figure 2). This can be very difficult for the beginning student and limit the types of work the experienced practitioner can do. Working against one's own discomfort significantly increases the client's risk of pain. I have developed tools to solve these problems. They maintain the open, resilient span of the fist while reducing tension and effort in the practitioner's arms and shoulders. I call them "hand stabilizers" or "grips" for short. They are silicon rubber casts of the shape of the closed fist (figures 3 and 4). They can also function as spacers with fingers, knuckles and hands effectively supported in a variety of working geometries: square, one knuckle up, two knuckles up, etc.

Each knuckle receives individually-cast support that keeps it in alignment and redistributes working forces evenly through to the palm of the hand. These shapes give the hand the same depth and solidity of contact as an elbow. They are soft, waterproof, easily washable and are non-threatening to clients. Enclosed by hand during use, they do not interfere with appropriate client-to-Rolfer contact. Hand grips provide an inner core of resilient support to the closed hand that can:

- * INCREASE MECHANICAL STABILITY
- * IMPROVE PRACTITIONER ENDURANCE/LEVERAGES
- * DEEPEN CONTACT WITH LESS EFFORT
- * PROVIDE NEW WORKING SURFACES/GEOMETRIES
- * PREVENT CHRONIC TENSION AND STRESS

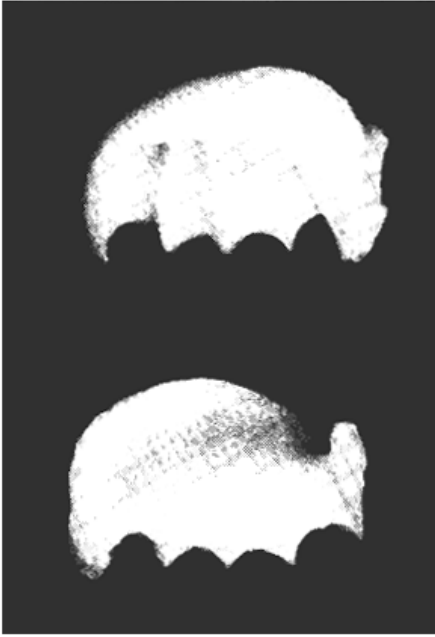
It is my hope that our Rolfing community will explore this concept. Hand grip stabilizers may be very useful for our newer students who have not had time to develop the strength or stability

we see in experienced, Advanced Rolfers. Hand grips also should prove useful to practicing Rolfers who wish to reduce work stress, explore new working geometries, or increase their work load with minimal negative effects on their hands, arms or shoulders.

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A



C



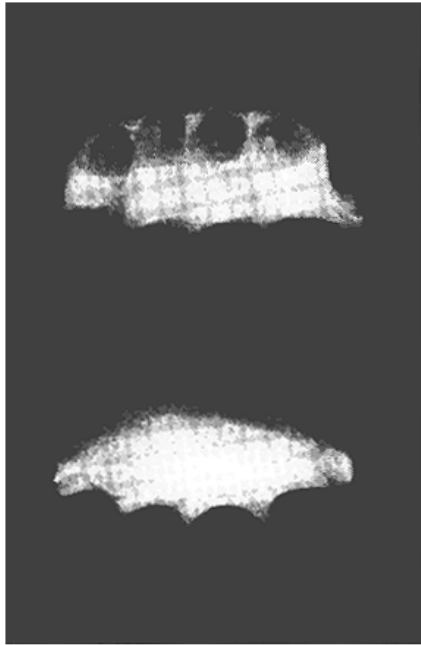
B



D

Figure 1. A: A set of right and left grips. This set fits nicely inside the closed hand.

B, C, D: Details of how they fit into the hand.



A



C



B



D

Figure 2. A. A larger set of grips. This pair give more support to the hand during lateral, shearing or twisting forces.