

## Research Says Exercise Boosts Executive Skills: Top Ten Toys for Smart Bodies and Smarter Minds

JENN CHOI | OCTOBER 10, 2014

Last week, Dr. Charles Hillman and his colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign published a study in the journal *Pediatrics* concluding that children who engaged in physical activity programs afterschool showed improvements in critical executive functioning skills such as sustaining attention, shifting between tasks, and avoiding distractions.

In a world that is filled with brain training apps, memory boost programs, and even test prep centers for four year olds, it is rather refreshing to see scientific studies still supporting good old fashioned run-around time. The good news is that this intervention doesn't require much in the way of tools but parents and schools can still support children by offering them thoughtfully-designed toys that maximize movement and fun.

These are some of my favorite tools that train the body and the mind. Sometimes people think of the body and mind as two separate entities but indeed, we know from physical interventions such as swimming, massages, yoga, and even a good mattress can certainly help us adults go about our day with more clarity. Children are no different and deserve no less. Here are top ten favorites in no particular order.

### 6: Funnybones Game- (\$9.99)

My mother taught me how to play this game using little pebbles she found outside. She called it Gonggi. Growing up in war-torn Korea, there weren't too many toys around. She had to be the inventor of her own fun. Centuries ago, kids did just that, using stones and bones to toss and catch with the kind of agility that make your friends think you are totally awesome. Funnybone Toys reinvented this product to allow for our children to reclaim this classic game. They even created a removable chain to help kids start playing without too much frustration. It is as brilliant as it is benevolent.

Hopefully, with the novelty of new toys and tools, parents and children will be motivated to make some changes and find more time to play.

*Note: Every product has been personally tested by Toys Are Tools' testers. Products were submitted to facilitate a review. Some were also purchased by the writer. Reviews are never promised.*

*More best toy tips from Jenn at Toys Are Tools.*

