

**Chapter 13**  
**Grrrr . . . Mmmm**  
**Hunger and Contentment**  
*Babkin Palmomental Reflex*

Grrr! I'm so hungry!  
Grrr! I'm so hungry!  
Grrr! I'm so hungry!  
I'm hungry and I'm mad.

Omsk! Wanna bite you!  
Omsk! Wanna bite you!  
Omsk! Wanna bite you!  
I'm hungry and I'm mad.

Oooo, Won't you feed me?  
Oooo, Won't you feed me?  
Oooo, Won't you feed me?  
I'm hungry and I'm sad.

Mmmm, I love you.  
Mmmm, I love you.  
Mmmm, I love you.  
I'm full and feelin' glad.

Ahhh, I'm so sleepy.  
Ahhh, I'm so sleepy.  
Ahhh, I'm so sleepy.  
Ahhh . . .

## 13. Grrrr . . . Mmmm

### *Development*

Driving back from my first class on infant reflexes, I got tangled up in the hieroglyphics of Bay Area bridges. I found myself circling San Francisco's Mission Hill district at ten o'clock at night. As I passed the same slumped figure by the same gas station for the third time, I noticed that my hands were pressed against the steering wheel, and that my tongue was between my teeth. "Babkin!" I exulted.

The *Babkin Palmomental (Palm–Mouth) Reflex* synchronizes hands, neck, and jaw. A symmetrical pressure against the palms stimulates the head to move toward something, and the mouth to open. Imagine a baby, nursing and kneading its little hands against the breast.

The *Babkin Palmomental* is about hands and mouth working together for nourishment and communication. When *Babkin* is integrated, it leads to mobility in facial expression, speech, and gesture. When *Babkin* is retained (or re-visited, as on my nighttime hejira), hands, neck, and mouth remain linked, expressing tension.

Have you ever found your tongue between your teeth as you thread a needle? Does your jaw tighten when you clench your fists? Have you seen children who mimic the movement of their handwriting with their tongues? I once accompanied a cellist whose jaw movements mirrored those of his bowing arm.

*Babkin* is often active when a person has had issues around nourishment. Difficulty nursing, habitual hunger, and food allergies can all lead to a retained *Babkin* reflex. It's often active for those with eating eccentricities: for children who eat with their hands long past the age when forks are the social norm; for messy eaters; for those who use food for comfort.

This reflex often comes up around issues of self-expression. The hand gripped around a pencil as the tongue is pushed between the teeth, the set jaw and clenched fists of anger, the tense hands of a stutterer -- all these are indicators of *Babkin*.

### *Reflex Life*

The *Babkin Palmomental Reflex* emerges at nine weeks *in utero*, and is active during the first three months after birth. It helps prepare for the *Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex*.

### *Image*

**Grrr . . . Mmmm** describes a catharsis; from the frustration of being hungry to the contentment of being fed. Babies do not necessarily go through the frustrated "grrr" stage of this song, if they are sufficiently secure about getting fed when hungry. But eventually -- certainly by age two -- most of us experience frustration. We learn to work it out in a social context (usually with mom).

**Grrr . . . Mmmm** uses the blues scale. The blues are a time-honored language of complaint and catharsis. Simply wailing away on those diminished thirds and fifths can go a long way to releasing *Babkin*, or whatever other blues you might be carrying.

### *Helps*

**Eating**-related issues, **handwriting** and other **fine motor** activities, **stuttering** and other **communication** issues, appropriate release of **anger**, **freedom of expression**. It can also facilitate **cranial release**.

### *Noticing*

Clench your fists. Do you notice any corresponding feeling in your jaw or neck? They can be very subtle – simply a heightened awareness, a little buzz along the TMJ (temporo-mandibular joint). It can be more obvious – an actual grimace, an impulse to grit your molars or press your tongue against your front teeth.

Grit your teeth. Do you notice any corresponding feelings in your hands? You might feel a subtle tingling of the fingers, or an actual tensing of the fingers into claws or fists.

Relax your jaw and say, “Mmmm.” Do you notice a corresponding relaxation in your hands? It can be very subtle, like a ripple of energy extending out from the center of your palm. Notice your neck and shoulders. Do they release and drop?

Knead your hands in the air. Do you begin to salivate? Do you notice an impulse to swallow?

### *Activity*

“Grrr !” Grit your teeth. Clench your fists, preferably so that your fingers are digging into the center of your palms.

“Omsk!” (Chomping sound). Make a biting motion. Swipe your claws or talons and freeze them into position.

“Oooo . . .” Purse your lips. Hands open and pleading.

“Mmmm . . .” Hum and enjoy. Hands make kneading motions in the air.

“Ahh . . .” (Yawning sounds). Stretch and let your hands do whatever they naturally do when you yawn.

The last “yawn” in the song covers about two octaves. The blues are an improvisatory medium; feel free to create your own tune. Or simply make yawning sounds that cover your own full vocal range.

### *Teaching Tips*

A few seconds of *Babkin* can be helpful in a stressful situation, at home or in the classroom. Just go back and forth between “Grrr!” and “Omsk!” until the child seems ready to move on. You need not even do the song. Sometimes it helps to be a bear or a tiger.

*Babkin* is also helpful to do before children pick up a pencil. It particularly helps those who “write” everything twice: with hands *and* tongue.