

Children's Mental Health Week 2024

Brain Breaks – 2 a day (beginning or end of AM/PM session; transitions between lessons; in the middle of a lesson if children start to disengage)



Brain Breaks

Brain breaks are mental and physical activities to break up a period of concentration.

These may be particularly useful after spending long periods sitting or using technology. The brain break may be relaxing or energising but they intend to get the body and mind going and re-focus the participants.

Depending on the age of the children they could be used every hour or less for around five minutes. Try to use a variety, and fit them well to the mood and situation. For example, you should choose an active brain break if the previous activity is sedentary, or a maths-related one if you have been studying a different topic.

1. Ear-nose switcheroo

This is a quick and easy challenge to reset the brain. Instruct kids to touch their left ear with their right hand and at the same time touch their nose with their left hand. Then have them switch their hands and touch their right ear with their left hand and their nose with their right hand. Switch back and forth a few times. Then have them close their eyes, take a deep breath, and blow it all out.

You can see what it looks like here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNfDRdGyppk>

2. Stretch it out

It's never a good idea to spend too much time sitting in one position. Allow kids to take a break and bring some flexibility back into their spines. Have them stand with their feet shoulder-distance apart. Put their left hand on their hip and raise their right hand overhead. Lean to the left and stretch their arm as far as they can to the left. Repeat on the right side. Then stand tall and slowly roll down one vertebra at a time until their hands reach the floor (or at least their shins). Have them take a deep breath then slowly roll back up. Repeat as necessary.

3. Float with jellyfish (one of my favourites)

When you really need to take the energy in your room down a notch, turn off the lights, set a timer, and put on a calming video. For example, Cat Trumpet put together a jellyfish aquarium video where kids will find themselves under the brilliant blue sea in the middle of a swarm of jellyfish. They'll be mesmerized by the slow, fluid motions and lulled into calmness by the soothing music.

You can see the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdJjc6l6iIl>

4. Break out the hot hands

This is a good break when you sense a weariness in the air. Have kids rub their hands together vigorously until they warm up. Tell them to close their eyes and place their hands over their eyes. Instruct them to breathe deeply as they clear their minds and refocus.

5. Silent ball

Play a quick three-minute game of silent ball right before dismissal or before transitioning to a new activity. All you need is a small squishy ball. The rules are simple: 1) Stand up 2) Pass the ball around 3) If you drop the ball, you have to sit down 4) If you talk, you're out. This activity is one of those educational brain breaks that builds a positive classroom community, fosters friendly competition, and boosts nonverbal communication. Enjoy the silence.

6. Play popcorn

Students will all be sitting in their chairs, and at any time, a student can jump up and say, "Pop!" Once they do, that student remains standing. If two students pop up at the same time, everyone takes their seats, and the game starts over. How quickly can the entire class pop without having to start over?

7. Balance break

A great way to get kids out of their chairs is to practice balance. Have them hop on one foot. Then up the ante by having them stand on one foot and bend their other knee out in front of them.

8. Find out how it's made

Remember that classic Sesame Street video about how crayons are made? We watched in awe as crayons rolled off the assembly line, wrapped in paper, and then slipped into those familiar cardboard boxes. Kids today are just as fascinated by how things are made! Here are our favorite videos about how things are made—from fireworks to LEGO:

<https://www.weareteachers.com/how-things-are-made-videos/>

9. Take a doodle break

Downtime is essential for brain health. Kids need time for their growing brains to integrate and process the vast amount of information they receive each day. In other words, it is actually beneficial to give our kids time to allow their minds to wander. Try this: Set a timer for three to five minutes and let kids silently doodle with pencil and paper while soft, calming music plays in the background.

10. Brain break spinner: <https://wordwall.net/resource/3561313/brain-break-spinner> and a more simple version <https://wordwall.net/resource/5142036/movement-break> Simply genius!

11. Act like...

A fun way to engage kids is to give them different scenarios to act out. See how many they can do in 3 minutes. Try asking them to act like:

- They're driving a car
- They're blowing bubbles
- A bee is flying around them
- They just met their favourite singer

12. Riddles

Kids love a good riddle. Give them easy ones to see how many they can solve in one brain break, or try to stump them with a tougher riddle. Try these 43 awesome riddles for kids (with answers): <https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/riddles-for-kids/>