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QUICK REGULATION EXERCISES FOR THE CLASSROOM

The following exercises are quick ways for you to support your students in developing their ability to self-regulate. These exercises will help your students to manage their stress by calming or energizing their bodies and mind in 30 seconds to five minutes. Regular practice can help you and your students to be more grounded, more oriented in present time, and more connected to their breath. To build this new habit, look for opportunities to build these into your transitions and classroom management throughout the school day. You may want to use this list as an inspiration to create additional activities for you and your students.

Movement

Get Grounded

Sitting in a chair, place both feet on the floor and gently press into your feet so that you feel the muscles in your legs. Just notice your legs and how they feel. Imagine your legs as the strong trunk of a tree supporting you. Take a few deep breaths. You can also take your arms, cross them and squeeze up and down your arms. This can offer containment and support as well.

Stretch It Out

Stretch your arms over your heads and reach for the sky. Then gently fold over and reach for your toes imagining you can stretch into the earth. Take 3 long, deep breaths and wiggle your spine to release tension. Straighten your back and lift up to a standing position. Repeat 3 to 5 times.

Touch the Sky Stretch

Reach your arms to the sky. Lean back as far as you can safely. Hold it for a count of 10 seconds. To add variation, you can also try this: Extend the stretch high up to the sky and breathe deeply for a count of 5 seconds. Hold the breath for a count of 5 seconds. Then exhale deeply for 5 seconds. Repeat this 3 times.

Shake, Rattle, and Roll

Relax your body and shake your right arm from the top of your shoulder down through your fingertips. Then shake from your elbow to your fingertips. Now shake your hand only. Take a moment to notice the difference between your arms. Repeat with your left arm. Then repeat with each leg.

Run in Place

Stand up. Shake out all the tension in your body. Run in place for 30 seconds. Stop and take a deep breath. Start running again for another 30 seconds. Take 3 deep breaths. Notice how your body feels.

Let the Music Move You

Pick your favorite song on your iPod or computer and enjoy it with your students to set an energized tone in the classroom. Focus completely on the sound for the duration of the song and allow the music to take you to a different place. If you are able...get up and dance!

Meridian Charging

Stand up. Make a loose fist with your left hand and gently tap up and down your right arm. Repeat with the left arm. Then tap on your head and do the same up and down both legs. Take a long deep breath and notice how your whole body feels.

Jump

Stand up and position your feet a little more than shoulder-length apart. Put your arms at your side. Take a deep breath. Do 10 jumping jacks. Take another deep breath. Do another 10 jumping jacks. Take another deep breath.

Breathing and Meditation

Breathe It Out

Close your eyes and relax your body so that you are comfortable in your chair. Place your feet firmly on the ground. Scan your body for any stress or tension and slowly release all of your muscles so they relax. Take a deep breath. Picture your breath filling any stressed or tensed area with a gentle healing light in a color that feels good to you. Allow the tension to melt away. Then, move to another area. Continue to move throughout your body until there is no more tension.

Deep Belly Breathing

Place your hand below your belly button so that you can feel your breath fill your abdomen. Take a deep breath in filling your abdomen. Then breathe out fully so your belly gets flat. Focus on your breath as it moves through your body. Anytime that your mind wanders re-focus on your breath. Repeat for 2 minutes.

Counting Your Breath

Sit comfortably in your chair. Breathe in for a count of 5 seconds. Hold your breath for a count of 5 seconds. Then release your breath for 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Relaxation Response

Sit quietly in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Focus on deeply relaxing all your muscles by first tensing them; then letting the tension go. Focus on your breath to deepen the relaxation. As you breathe in say the word "one" and as you breathe out say the word "one". Do this for 2 minutes.

Listen to the Sound

Relax your body so that you are sitting comfortably. Close your eyes. Ring a bell and listen to the sound until the vibration ends. Notice how the sound feels in your body. Repeat 2 more times.

Affirmations for Joy and Happiness

Repeat this affirmation 10 times with your eyes closed. I choose happiness, peace, and love. My heart is open and wonderful things flow into my life.

Change Your Mind

Choose an affirmation that represents your goal, such as "I am relaxed" or "I am focused". Close your eyes and allow all your muscles to relax. Repeat this affirmation over and over again as you inhale and exhale. Allow this affirmation to sink deeply into your mind.

Expression and Connection

Free Writing

Get all those racing thoughts out of your head! For 1-5 minutes, write everything that crosses your mind without worrying about punctuation, grammar or what is being written. Get it out.

Compliment Your Classmate

Before the start of class, ask your students to say one positive thing to a peer sitting across from or next to them.

Set Your Group Intention

Take a few moments to close your eyes. Picture the class you are in going great. Imagine everyone working together happily, sharing ideas, listening to each other and coming up with answers to questions that help with lots of participation. The energy in the room is relaxed, focused and safe. Hold this image for a moment.

Gratitude and Acknowledgment

Have everyone write 3 things they are grateful for today. Go around the room and have each person share one thing they wrote.

Laugh!

Share a joke or a funny story. Or, try this exercise to make everyone laugh. Start by repeating "HO HO HO" for about 15 seconds. Switch to "HA HA HA" for 15 seconds. Then, laugh loudly (even if forced) for 15 seconds. Fake it until you make it!

Your Ideas

How else could you promote students' resilience by practicing grounding, orienting to the present time and connecting to breath?