

Finding Balance in the Classroom



Belly Breathing

Instruct your class to sit upright in their chairs or on the carpet. Guide the students to place both hands over their belly and breathe in slowly through the nose and out through the mouth. Ask them to sit quietly and pay attention to the flow of breath. On the in breath, the belly should move outward, and on the out breath it should move inward. Have them share their observations.



Mindful Moment

Taking a mindful moment to notice and name how you're feeling is an excellent grounding technique that can be used any time you notice your students needing a little break. This is a great one for you too, since you will join them in the process to practice what you teach. Simply set some time and instruct the students to draw or write whatever they feel in the current moment.



Bubble Breathing

Ask your students to imagine they have a bubble wand. Have them take a deep breath through the nose and breathe out through the mouth as they watch the room fill with bubbles and gently fall to the floor. (If you can blow real bubbles in the room—that would make an excellent challenge for the students to watch the bubbles fall without moving.)



Breath Doodle

After you demonstrate, have your students practice this exercise. Place a marker or pen on the page and begin slowly connecting your breath to each stroke, never letting your pen leave the page. Pause your pen each time you reach the end of your inhale, and then exhale as you start moving in another direction with your pen. Practice what it feels like to go fast and slow. Save some time at the end so students can use their imagination to turn the doodle into something new.



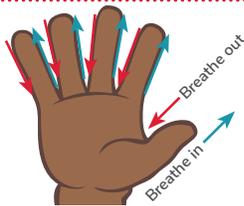
Move Your Body

If you find your kids squirming in their seats, that's probably because they need to release some energy. Creating moments to move the body helps everyone, including you, to regulate. Put on a favorite song and have a dance party. Freeze dance is so much fun! Pause the music—everyone freezes until the music starts again. Have students notice how their body feels before and after.



Five Senses

Engage all five senses as you count back from five as follows. Sitting quietly with a hand up, have students name five things they can see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste or wish they could taste. You can have students practice individually or one at a time in a group.



Five-Finger Breathing

Five-finger breathing is another quick and easy breathing exercise. Simply hold your hand out in front of you, and with the other hand, breathe in as you trace each finger up and breathe out as you trace each finger down—finishing with five deep breaths. When you're done, use your other hand. Have students practice this exercise and explore or share how they feel afterward.



Stretch

Stretching is so helpful for the nervous system. Have your students stretch out, arms and legs spread wide like a starfish. Next, ask them to fold their arms across their chest, giving themselves a big hug and making their body as small as possible. Then they should squeeze their arms tightly, pulling the chin toward the chest. Hold each pose for 10 seconds and repeat! Share more ideas for a great stretch with your students.



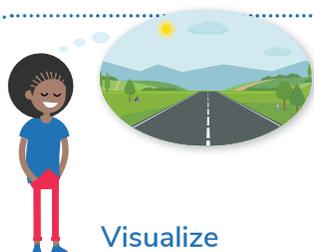
Be Silly

This is a simple and effective grounding exercise that kids really respond to. It's silly and bound to prompt some laughter, too. The idea is that there is a pressure point right below the nose. Ask students to place their index finger as an imaginary mustache and take a few deep breaths together. It seems silly but it's great for grounding.



Sing

Choose a song that works for you and your classroom as your regulation song. Keep it consistent. Have all of your students learn the words so they can sing together. Singing releases endorphins in the brain, which are important for managing stress. A quick internet search can help you find the right song for your classroom.



Visualize

To create a moment of reflection for your classroom, guide students through a visualization. Ask your class to imagine an empty road. Guide them through a few questions so they can practice focusing. For example: What do you see around you? Are there trees, mountains, animals or other people? What are the colors you see in the sky? Are there rocks on the road? Where is the road going? After your students are done, have them draw out their visualizations before they share.