



Self-Management

Brain Boost

Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

We all have days where we have trouble getting through even the easiest of tasks. Our brain feels like it is trying to swim through syrup, and we cannot seem to break out of it. If you are home doing homework or in any unstructured setting we would get up and take a walk, grab a snack, or maybe watch 30 minutes of our favorite show before getting back to work. Research shows that in high school for every 30 minutes of focused work, students need a 5-minute break to retain what is being taught to them.

Unfortunately, while at school or during extracurricular activities these opportunities are often unavailable to us. Ensuring that we are building in breaks, both physical and creative, during especially difficult lessons is important to boost students' engagement and will increase their focus upon returning to the lesson.

Benefits of these breaks are plentiful and include:

1. Increased productivity
2. Decreased stress and anxiety
3. Increased brain function
4. Opportunities for social skills to naturally develop
5. Increased attention and focus during work time

We also need to understand how to recognize when it is time to take a brain break. We don't always have our timers out or are watching the clock so understanding the signals our body tells us is key in knowing when to ask for a brain break. When you start feeling tired, when it becomes hard to focus, if you start feeling restless in your seat or begin to "space out" and are finding it hard to maintain your attention it could be your body telling you it's time to take a brain break and refocus.

Key Takeaways:

- Students will recognize when a brain break is needed.
- Students will understand how to effectively ask for a brain break.
- Students will engage effectively in a brain break and be able to return to their work calmly and appropriately.

Duration + Materials:

- 10 Minutes
- Timer

Key Vocabulary:

- **Productivity-** The effectiveness of a productive effort.
- **Engagement-** The act of being engaged or engaging.
- **Focus-** The center of interest of activity.



Activity:

1. Teachers will intentionally build in breaks while they are writing their lesson or activity plans.
2. Teachers should be aware of their students' needs and "read the room". If students have been working diligently for at least 30 minutes or have just completed a difficult lesson or assignment, allow them no more than a 5-minute break.
3. Upon introducing a brain break, teachers should clearly inform students of the expectations, for example:
 - a. Students must remain calm and keep the noise level appropriate.
 - b. Students must be respectful of their classmates and teachers.
 - c. Students must keep their hands to themselves.
 - d. When it's time to return to work students must do so quickly and quietly.

Supplemental Materials:

Examples of brain breaks:

1. A true break- allow students time to chat with their peers, take a walk, use the restroom, etc.
2. Split class into two teams and do relay races to the board to solve simple problems.
3. Set a timer and allow students to engage in a preferred activity for 5 minutes at their seats.
 - a. This can be stretching, reading, drawing, etc.
4. Play "Simon Says" with the entire class.
5. Allow students to pair and share about a topic of their choice.
6. Add in a weekly "Genius Hour" for students to work on a project of their choice having to do with the class you teach.
7. Quick Yoga- lead a 5-minute yoga stretch with your class
8. Free journal- allow students 5-10 minutes to journal on a topic of their choice.
9. Play a quick game of "Would You Rather".
 - a. Would you rather eat only pasta or only pizza for the rest of your life?
 - b. Would you rather sing everything you say forever or never sing again?
10. Allow a student 5 minutes to teach the class a skill.

Reinforcement Activities:

1. Teachers should work to incorporate natural brain breaks into their classroom. For example:
 - a. Allowing movement during class like letting students walk back and forth to the board.
 - b. If you see a specific student is struggling and in need of a break, send them on an errand – for example, drop off something to the office or deliver something to another teacher.
 - c. Allow students to share ideas, engage in discussions with the class and incorporate turn and talks to allow students opportunities for socialization, while still staying on topic.