Movement Breaks and Breathing

When we take a brain break, it refreshes our thinking and helps us discover another solution to a problem or see a situation through a different lens.

MOVEMENT BREAKS

Walk or Self-Propel Wheelchair

Walk or self-propel wheelchair for at least 10 consecutive minutes

Cross Crawls

1. Stand up or remain seated
2. Bring your knee up and touching one hand to the opposite knee; then switch.
*Variation – Touch the opposite hand to the opposite foot behind your back

Hands Brain Break

1. Stand Up or remain seated.
2. Start by waving your right hand in front of you left to right. Your palm should be facing away from you while keeping your hand with your fingers pointing up.
3. Now stop that hand and have your left hand in front of you waving it up and down.
4. Now practice moving them at the SAME TIME. Do not move your hands going diagonally.
5. Now switch to have your right hand up and down and your left hand left and right.
*Do this faster and switch often to make it more difficult.
*Lastly, to increase the difficulty, have your arms crossed while doing this.
Forward and Backward Circles

1. Point your arms toward the ceiling.
2. Keep your elbow straight and move your right arm forward creating a large circle. Continue making forward circles with this arm. Now do the same with your other arm except go BACKWARD. Continue with both arms moving at the same time. Make sure you have this pattern working before you continue.
3. While both arms continue to move, lift your right foot off the ground and make a ninety degree angle with your knee. Hold this for a few seconds.
4. Now extend your right knee out to make your leg parallel to the ground. Hold for a few seconds.
5. Stop.
6. Repeat the same process again with your left leg.

Neck Health - Isometric Cervical Flexion

1. Begin sitting with good posture.
2. Place two fingers on your forehead.
3. Without moving your head, slowly push into your fingers as if you were trying to look downward.
4. Hold for 2-3 seconds.
5. Relax.
6. Repeat two times.

Neck Health - Levator Scapulae Stretch

1. Begin sitting and grasp the side of the chair with the arm of the side that is to be stretched.
2. Rotate your head away from the side that is to be stretched.
3. Grasp the opposite side of your head with your other hand, and gently pull your head down toward your shoulder.
4. Hold.
5. Repeat two times.

Neck Health - Chin Tucks

1. Begin sitting with good posture.
2. Look straight ahead and pull your chin in towards the back of your neck.
3. Hold.
4. Repeat two times.
Neck Health - Scapular Retraction

1. Begin by sitting or standing with your back straight, arms at your side and elbows bent 90 degrees.
2. Slowly pinch your shoulder blades down and together as you rotate your arms out your side.
3. Do not raise your shoulders as you do the movement.
4. Return to starting position.
5. Repeat two times.

Neck Health - Upper Trapezius Stretch

1. In a seated position bring your hand on the side you wish to stretch behind your back.
2. Place your other hand on top of your head and gently pull your head to the side, away from the side you wish to stretch.
3. Hold.
4. Repeat two times.

BREATHING BREAKS

Studies show that breathing exercises can actually improve cognitive function, encourage positive thought processes, and reduce symptoms of anxiety.

4-7-8 Breathing

1. First, place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, behind your two front teeth. Try to keep your tongue in this position for the whole duration.
2. Part your lips and exhale all breath with a whooshing sound through your mouth.
3. Now close your lips and inhale through your nose as you mentally count to four.
4. Next, hold your breath for seven seconds.
5. Finally, exhale from your mouth for eight seconds with another big whoosh.
Roll Breathing

1. This is a great way to tap into the rhythm of your breathing. Feel free to practice this one in any position, but lying down on your back is a good way to become more familiar with this technique.
2. Place your left hand on your belly and your right hand on your chest. Pay attention to how your hands move as you breathe in and out.
3. Breathe in through your nose so that your left (belly) hand goes up when you inhale and your right (chest) hand stays still. Breathe out through your mouth. Do this eight to 10 times.
4. After repeating eight to 10 times, now it’s time to add the next step to your breathing. Inhale first into your lower lungs, and then continue inhaling into your upper chest. Take deep and slow breaths. Your right hand (chest) should rise as your left hand (belly) falls.
5. Exhale slowly through your mouth and notice how first your left hand and then your right hand fall.
6. Practice this type of breathing for three to five minutes. Be aware of the movement of your belly hand and chest hand alternating like rolling waves.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Hold your right thumb over your right nostril and inhale deeply through your left nostril.
2. Once you’ve reached your full breath, close your left nostril with the ring finger and exhale through the right nostril.
3. Now switch — inhale through the right nostril, close it with the right thumb and exhale through the left nostril.
4. Repeat this for a few minutes or until you feel yourself significantly more focused. Unlike the other exercises, this technique is said to energize and focus us rather than enter a deep relaxation state.

Other Resources

Keeping your mind and body healthy
https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/wellness-activitybreaks.pdf

Take a Break - Teacher Toolbox

Love Your Brain Yoga
https://www.loveyourbrain.com/yoga