**Brain-Based Self-Regulation Activities for the Classroom**

When we are focused & paying attention to our thoughts, feelings and choices, we have a much greater opportunity to change those thoughts and feelings that are not serving us well in life and in school. When we grasp this awareness, we see and feel the difference!

***To Wake Up or Energize the Brain***

* *Movement Song:*

Sing a song that has movement, like Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

* *Free Dance with Freeze*

Play an uplifting song for 1 minute. Have everyone free dance and then stop when you say “freeze.”

* *Jumping Jacks*

Have students do 5 jumping jacks or hop on one leg 5 times

* *Squiggle Story*

On a blank sheet of paper, whiteboard, or Promethean Board, draw one squiggly line. Give students one minute to stand and draw with their opposite hand, turning the line into a picture or design of their choice.

* *Opposite Sides*

Movement is critical to learning and memory. Have students stand and blink with the right eye while snapping the fingers of their left hand. Repeat this with the left eye and right hand. Students could also face one another and tap the right foot once, left foot twice, and right foot three times, building speed they alternate toe tapping with their partner.

* *Symbolic Alphabet*

Sing the alphabet with names of objects rather than the letters.

* *Follow the Leader*

Have students follow the type of walk of a student for 30 seconds.

* *Mental Math*

Give a set of three instructions, counting the sequence to a partner for 30 seconds. Example: Count by two until 20, then count by three until 50, finishing with seven until 80. Switch and give the other partner another set of numbers to count.

* *Invisible Pictures*

Have students draw a picture in the air while their partner guesses what it is. You could give them categories such as foods, places, or other ways to narrow the guessing. Encourage the students to move their arms in a wide range, crossing their arms over the bodies. This will stimulate both hemispheres of their brain.

* *Scribble*

Have the students scribble on a piece of paper for 5 seconds. After they stop, ask the students to identify any object within their drawing and outline it. Have them think about how they felt as they scribbled.

* *Doodle*

Doodle for 5 seconds

* *Cross Crawl*

Stand or sit. Place your right elbow on your left leg. Switch and place your left elbow on your right leg. Continue for 320 seconds, as if you were marching.

* *Lazy 8s*

Either sitting or standing, focus on an object that is eye level. Put your hand straight out in front of you and draw an imaginary figure 8 in front of you. Reverse the direction you draw the 8. Let your eyes and head move with the motion.

* *Elephant*

Place your left ear on your left shoulder. Bring your arm out in front of you, as if you were an elephant with its trunk. Repeat 3 times and then switch to the right ear and arm.

***To Calm Down the Brain***

A focused-attention practice is a brain exercise for quieting the thousands of thoughts that distract and frustrate us each day. When the mind is quiet and focused, we are able to be present with a specific sound, sight, or taste. Research repeatedly shows that quieting our minds ignites our parasympathetic nervous system, reducing heart rate and blood pressure while enhancing our coping strategies to effectively handle the day-to-day challenges that keep coming. Our thinking improves and our emotions begin to regulate so that we can approach an experience with variable options.

* *Breathing*

Use the breath as a focus point. Have students place one hand close to their nose (not touching) and one hand on their belly. As they breathe in, have them feel their bellies expand. As they exhale, they can feel the warm air hit their hand. Students will focus on this breath for only one minute. Let them know that it's OK when thoughts sometimes come into the mind uninvited. Tell them to exhale that thought away.

* *Colors*

Visualize colors while focusing on the breath. Inhale a deep green, and exhale a smoky gray. Have the students imagine the colors as swirling and alive with each inhale. They can pair the color with a feeling., which will also help name / regulate their emotions.

* *Movement*

Have students stand and as they inhale, lift an arm or leg and wiggle it, exhaling it back to its original position. Repeat at least 3 times with each leg.

* *Sound*

The use of sound is very powerful for engaging a calm response. In the three classrooms where I teach, we use rain sticks, bells, chimes, and music.

* *Cross-over*

Have students stand up, cross their arms over each other and connect their palms, locking their fingers together. Then bring their arms to their chest. While doing this, have them focus on their breathing.

* *Leg Cross*

Have the students cross their legs at the ankles, with their dominant foot over the other. Then uncross. Then cross their legs with their non-dominant leg over the other.

* *Jaw Massage*

Gently massage the area around your jaw – on the bottom of your ears in a circular motion.