

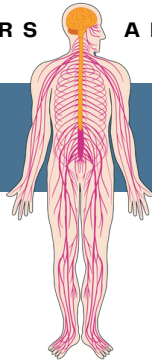
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**FOCUSED
ATTENTION PRACTICES
FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

FOR ENERGIZING

AND STEADYING

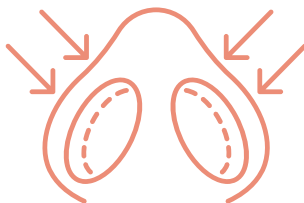


BY DR. LORI DESAUTELS
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1 . N O S T R I L B R E A T H I N G

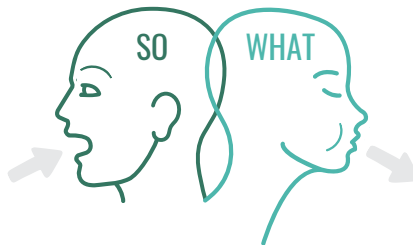
With your thumb, close your left nostril and breathe in through your right for four seconds. Hold for four seconds and place your first finger on your right nostril and breathe out for 6 seconds. Now breathe in for four counts in your left nostril, hold for four and then breathe out for six counts in your right nostril. Repeat alternating nostrils three times and notice the sensations in your brain and body.
(Closing our eyes is always an option!)



[S]

2 . S O W H A T ?

When we are feeling mildly irritated or anxious, this FoAP can help calm us and reframe the experience that is bothersome. As we breathe in, we say (in our heads) “so” and as we breathe out for a longer exhale, we say to ourselves, “what.” We do this a few times, imagining if this worry or frustration will matter a week from now, a month from now, or a year from now. This is a great one to do with smaller worries or irritations.
(Closing our eyes is always an option.)



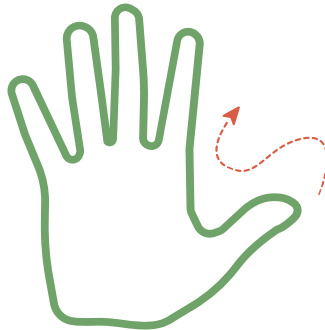
3 . G O L D E N C H O R D

In this FoAP, we imagine a golden cord with a glittering ball attached. This cord connects our chest to our bellies. As we take a deep breath in, we see the glittering ball move up along the golden cord into our chests and as we exhale, we see the glittering ball move back down the cord into our bellies. You can imagine this movement as fast or slow as you would like. Try this for one minute as you focus on your breath and the vision of the glittering movement.



4 . L I F E L I N E T R A C I N G

As we breathe deeply, we trace the lifelines on our right hand with our left finger matching our breath to the movements. After 30 seconds, we switch hands, and with deep inhales and exhales, we trace the other lifelines on our hands matching the movement to our breath.



5 . D R A G O N B R E A T H

This is an energizing or sympathetic nervous system breath that helps create attention and energy in our nervous system before we begin an assignment, performance, or activity that requires concentration and some added energy.

For 20 seconds, stick out your tongue and pant like a dog. Try to do this quickly as you see your belly moving only. Stop and take two long deep breaths. Repeat the breath of fire with your mouth closed for 10 seconds and then sit quietly for a minute and notice any sensations in your body or brain. What do you notice?

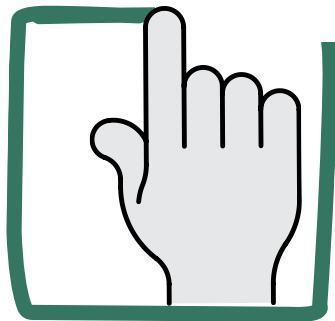
Can you feel the energy in specific spots?



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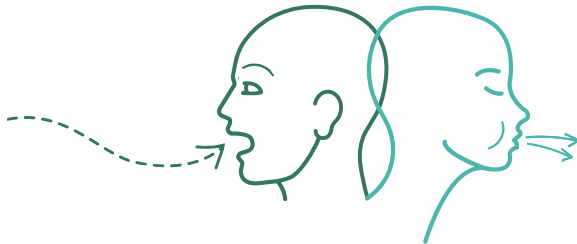
6 . B O X B R E A T H I N G

In this FoAP, we draw an imaginary box in the air with our finger as we breathe for four counts on our inhales and exhales as we create the shape. This is a calming breath and can be repeated a few times.



7 . E N E R G I Z E

In this breath exercise, think of a performer preparing for an event. We take a long deep breath in and then exhale quickly and fast. We see athletes using this breath to prime their brains and bodies before a competitive event. It is important to start with 5 or 10 breaths and then build up to 30 but this takes time. This is a powerful breath we can use to energize our brains and bodies when we are feeling tired, unfocused, and sluggish.



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8 . H A N D M A S S A G E

For one minute, with hand sanitizer or lotion, we begin to give ourselves a hand massage as we intentionally breathe in and out paying attention to our breath and the sensations in our hands and wrists. Begin the massage at the wrists and move up our hands to our fingertips on both hands.



9 . C O N T A I N E R H O L D

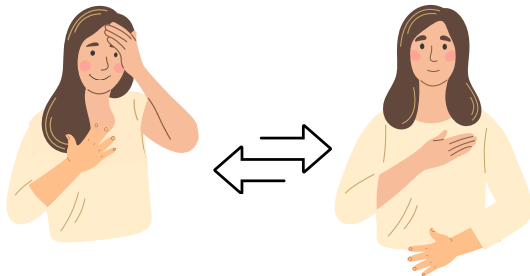
In this FoAP, we begin by placing our right hand under our left armpit and our left hand on our right shoulder. As we breathe in, we give ourselves a little squeeze and as we breathe out, we slowly release that squeeze. We do this three times slowly and then switch sides. This is an excellent practice to help us feel grounded and steady when we are feeling anxious and unsettled. We can do this for a minute or two or until we begin to feel a bit calmer in our nervous system.



[S]

1 0 . H E A D T O B E L L Y

In this FoAP, we place our right hand on our forehead and our left hand on our chest. In this position take three to four deep breaths and as you inhale provide a little pressure to your head and chest. Following three deep breaths, move your hand from your forehead to your belly keeping your other hand on your chest. Repeat this a few more times! This practice helps to settle the nervous system and grounds us in our space.



11 . E Y E Y O G A

Keeping your head still, take your right hand with your first finger and move your finger back and forth from side to side and only move your eyes. Try not to move your head as you follow your finger. After you have tried this a few times, do this with a partner and have them watch you follow your finger to see if you can still your head. You can also move your finger up and down and in different positions but only follow with your eyes.



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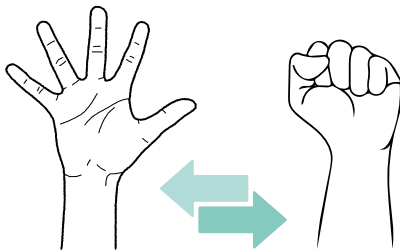
1 2 . O L D F A V O R I T E

S-Breathe in your favorite color as the color swirls up into your head and down into your body filling up all the spaces in your body you can imagine. Hold your breath for four counts and then slowly exhale releasing a worry, some irritation, or anxiety in a color that you do not like. Try this a few times and share with others how this feels!



1 3 . F I S T P U M P I N G

Stretch arms out to each side (shoulder height) and elbows straight opening and closing our fists with an energizing breath of fire. We begin for 30 seconds and then take a long slow deep breath and begin again for 30–60 seconds. This exercise brings an oxygen flow to the brain as the fingers act like a remote control for the brain waking us up with this repetition. We begin to focus on the movement and breath. Flip our hands over and open and close the fist again for another minute. This strengthens the nervous system.



1 4 . C R O S S I N G M O V E M E N T S

Make a fist with the thumb inside and straighten the arms out to a 60-degree angle. Inhale with straight arms and cross in front of our forehead on the exhale.

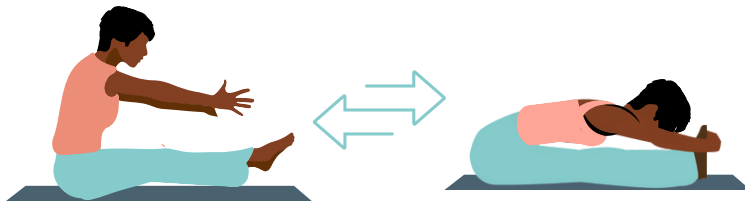
Inhale with straight arms at a 60-degree angle and cross behind our head. Continue with this powerful breath as this exercise releases calcium deposits in the shoulders and increases a improved blood flow to the brain.



15 . R O C K I N G O U R B R E A T H A N D B O D Y

Sitting with legs straight out in front, spine straight, with arms stretched out in front of us. Keep the arms parallel to the legs. On the inhale we are straight, and on the exhale, we lean forward keeping the arms parallel and at shoulder height.

Moving forward and then returning upright, we match our breath to these movements. This exercise strengthens kidney function and helps to strengthen the nervous system. We do this for one minute.



[E]

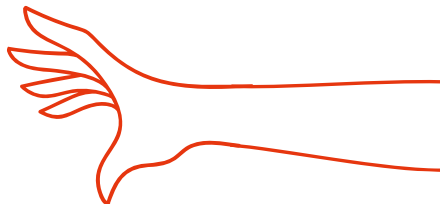
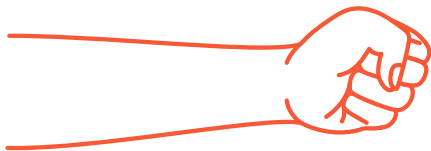
16 . T W I S T I N G A N D S W I R L I N G

Sitting with legs stretched out, place each hand (your open palm) on your temple and inhale as you twist left and exhale as you twist right. Keep the spine vertical and straight with firm pressure on each side of the temples of your head right above our ears. Elbows are out as you twist. This exercise balances the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems with the breath and twisting motions.



1 7 . P U N C H A N D G R A B

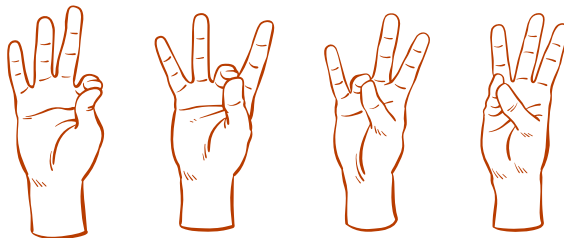
Standing with our feet about three feet apart, we make a fist with our hands. One arm at a time, we reach in front of us opening our fist on the inhale and closing it and drawing it back to our body on the exhale. We move back and forth with a powerful inhale and exhale opening and closing our fists alternating arms as we can pretend to grab what we need on the strong inhale opening our fists and grabbing as we pull our arms back to our bodies. This is much like a boxing movement with one arm at a time at any speed that feels comfortable to you! The faster you move, the more energy you create.



1 8 . F I N G E R T A P P I N G & R H Y T H M I C B R E A T H I N G

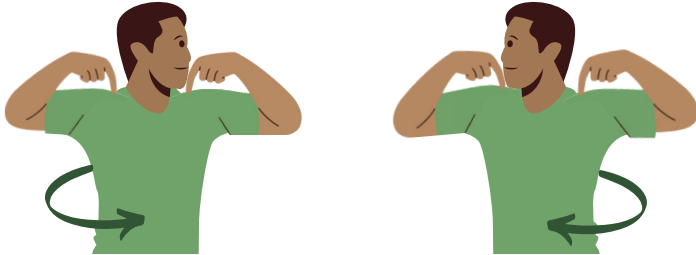
With both hands at the same time, begin with your thumb and first finger and tap fingers from the first finger to pinky as you tap all four fingers, you take a long inhale and as you tap back to the thumb and first finger, take a long exhale.

Repeat the tapping and breathing for one minute.



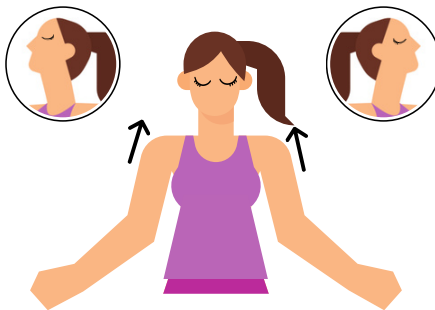
1 9 . V A G U S N E R V E

With fingers touching our shoulders and elbows lifted high, at shoulder length twist left with an inhale and right with an exhale and a powerful breath for one minute.



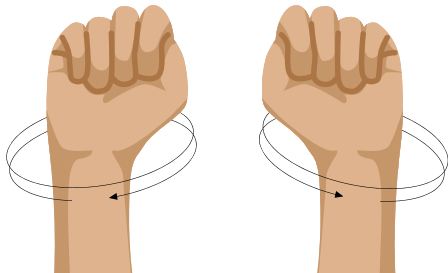
20 . S H R U G G I N G

Shrugging shoulders up and down with a fast breath keeping our neck loose, followed by 5 rotations of the neck in each direction. This improves circulation and the toning of the Vagus nerve.



2 1 . W R I S T R O T A T I O N

With arms stretched out in front of us and hands making a fist, (thumb tucked inside our palms) slowly rotate wrists for one minute and then switch the rotation in the opposite direction for another minute. This exercise with slow deep breaths can release the emotions we are holding in our chest.



2 2 . P U S H I T A W A Y

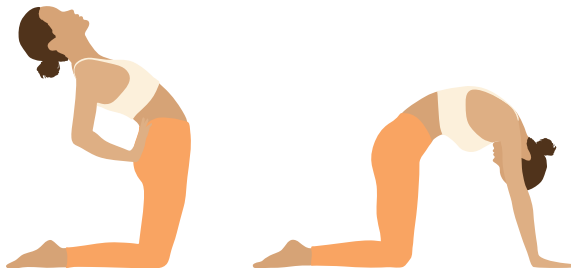
Clasp hands at chest level and on the inhale, then keeping hands clasped, we push them out in front of us opening our palms but still clasping our fingers, as our arms straighten with our palms facing out. On the exhale, bring your hands back towards your chest keeping the hands clasped!

Do this quickly with a powerful breath for one minute!



2 3 . C A M E L R I D E

On our knees, inhale and arch our back, and then as we slowly exhale, we curl our spines forward with hands resting gently on our legs. This exercise focuses on movement and deep breaths!



[S]

24 . H I S S I N G C O B R A

Lay on your bellies and lift your chest only with your hands by your side ...take a deep breath in and slowly begin to let the air out slowly and hiss like a snake through your teeth!



2 5 . B U T T E R F L Y

Press both feet together and sit with a straight spine placing your hands on your feet and begin to move your knees up and down and fly with your butterfly wings! After one minute of flying with your knees moving up and down, take a deep breath in holding the knees up, and slowly bring them down on a long exhale!



26 . FLY AWAY

Fly like the most beautiful bird and flap your wings as you move your arms up and down fanning the air with your beautiful wings and deep breath! Begin with your fingertips on the ground, and then with straight arms lift them up so the back of your hands touch on the inhale and on the exhale drop them to the ground. Repeat this movement with your powerful breath for one minute.



2 7 . B A L A N C I N G

Using 'balancing birds' or a stir stick, as we breathe deeply, we balance the beak of the birds on our fingers. Inhaling and exhaling, we balance moving our arms up in the air, behind our backs, and in other ways that challenge us to continue balancing the object on our fingertips.



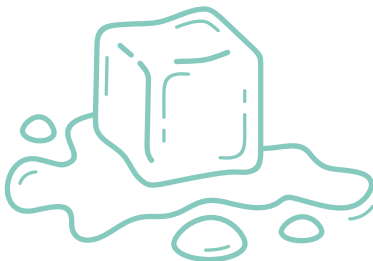
28 . G R O U N D E D T R E E P O S E

With one foot firmly planted on the ground, we slowly take our opposite leg and move it up the side of our planted leg and foot, taking deep breaths as we balance. We then lift our arms slowly waving them back and forth in a V shape above our heads as the wind blows through our branches. Changing positions, we move our trees as a tornado passes through. Changing our trees as a gentle rainstorm passes through. What other movements and changes can you create with the weather?



2 9 . I C E C U B E M E L T

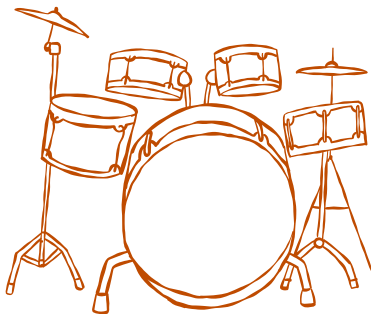
With a small ice cube, place it on our tongues, and for one -minute sense the ice melting in our mouths. Do not chew the ice. As we move the melting cube around in our mouths, we continue to breathe deeply through our noses. What are the sensations you have experienced? How many breaths did it take for the ice cube to melt? We can do this FoAP with frozen grapes and juice-flavored ice.



[E]

3 0 . B O D Y P E R C U S S I O N

In this FoAP, we increase blood flow and circulation as we make fists and firmly drum on our arms and legs, back and front, to a specific beat or collectively as a group! We can drum to music, or we can create our own chant as we drum. This stimulates blood flow in our bodies.



3 1 . C L A P P I N G

Standing or sitting and with straight arms, out to the side we begin a pattern of straight-arm clapping. We begin clapping in front, behind our backs, above our heads, and repeat taking powerful inhales and exhales with each arm movement. This is a series that causes us to remember each movement.



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3 2 . B L O S S O M I N G F L O W E R

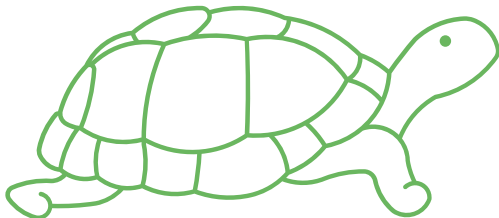
With our fingertips touching together from each hand, we begin opening our thumbs, with a deep inhale and then exhale as we continue to breathe, adding our first finger then second finger, and third, and when we come to the pinky, our hands pull apart and we take the biggest breath as our flowers bloom. As we open each pair of fingers, we can also state an affirmative sentence such as **“I am peaceful”, “I am strong”, “I am ready”, “I am getting there.”**



[S]

33 . TURTLE MOVES

Very slowly with long deep breaths, pull your head out of your shell in your very own turtle-like way! As you pull your head out of your shell, breathe in and then as you tuck your head back in, exhale long and slow. How do you hide your turtle head? How do you pull the turtle out of its shell? Each movement can look unique!



[S]

3 4 . W A R M U P

Place a hand warmer in your palms and as you pop it open and hold it to warm it up, take long slow breaths in and out as you move the hand warmer around in your palm, between your fingers noticing how the warmth feels in your hands.



3 5 . M O V E M E N T

This one is for younger children. Direct students to stand and, as they inhale, lift an arm, or leg and wiggle it, exhaling it back to its original position.

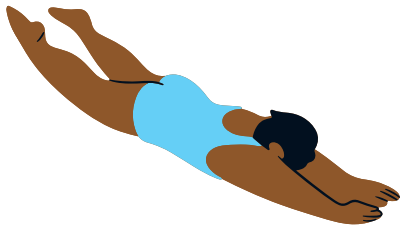
For younger grades beginning these focused-attention practices, it is good to include an inhale and exhale with any type of movement. As we continue to raise an arm or leg or change position, we inhale and then slowly bring the arm or leg back down with a longer exhale.



[S]

3 6 . D E E P D I V E B R E A T H

Have students inhale for four counts, hold for four, and exhale for four counts. You can increase the holding of your breath by a few seconds once the students find the rhythm of the exercise. With each breath, you pretend to dive deeper into a pool of water.



[S]

3 7 . S O U N D

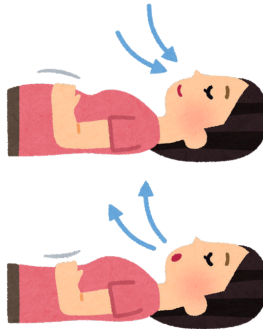
The use of sound is immensely powerful for engaging a calm response. In the three classrooms where I teach, we use rain sticks, bells, chimes, and music. There are many websites that provide music for focus, relaxation, and visualization. Here is one of my favorites.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_gtzGSNcCI



3 8 . R I S E A N D F A L L

As we breathe in and out through our noses, we can lie on the floor and place an object on our stomachs, enhancing our focus by watching the rising and falling of our bellies.



3 9 . H U M

There are many ways you can incorporate humming as a break or begin class. Lead students in Simon Says or Name That Tune or have them move their arms and legs to someone's humming. This activity releases stress and blockages in the brain stem.



40 . S I G H I N G

With a huge deep breath, let out the largest sigh you can! This is not a scream or shout but the swirling sound your voice creates when you let all the vocal energy go! Sighing can lead to yawning, and giant yawns calm the nervous system. Maybe we will try three sighs in a row!



4 1 . D E E P B R E A T H I N G A N D S C R U N C H I N G

Have students scrunch their toes and cross their legs at the ankles. Then they should cross the left arm over the right arm, clasp their hands together, and—keeping their hands clasped—bring them toward their chest. Have them hold that pose for 30 seconds as they take five deep breaths, and then have them take another 30 seconds to uncurl their toes, uncross their legs, extend and unclasp their hands, and uncross their arms while taking another five deep breaths. How did that feel? This contraction and release can strengthen our nervous system and prepares us for the day!



4 2 . F E E L I N G P H R A S E S

To begin the day, have students share through a picture or description how their bodies feel.

Some example phrases:

cold/warm/hot

twitchy/butterflies/soft/stuck

sharp/dull/itchy

shaky/trembly/tingly

jittery/weak; empty/full

relaxed/calm/peaceful

flowing/spreading; strong/tight/tense

dizzy/fuzzy/blurry

numb/prickly/jumpy/tearful/goosebumpy



Sensations are different from emotions in that they describe the way the body feels physically. Children who struggle with speaking can point to places on their bodies that hold a sensation. Sensory awareness promotes cognitive growth and self-awareness. When students can begin to identify their sensations, they begin to tap into where the negative feelings and images are. This FoAP can be implemented several times a day after different experiences.

Questions to ask as part of this practice:

- What are you sensing? As the teacher, begin by sharing and modeling your own sensations.
- Where is this in your body?
- What might be the reason for these butterflies?
- Can you draw what fuzzy, tingly(etc) looks like?

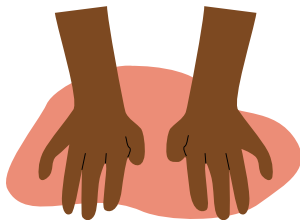
4 3 . B R E A T H I N G

Have students inhale deeply, lifting both arms in the air over their heads and holding their breath for four seconds. As they exhale, have them slowly place their hands on the back of their neck and massage their neck. They can repeat these three or four times until they feel more relaxed.



4 4 . P L A Y D O U G H A N D S E N S A T I O N S

For one minute, each student receives a handful or pile of clay or playdough and begins to feel the sensations in their hands. Stretching, molding, breaking into pieces are a few of the options we can create as we focus on the texture of the playdough. Students can then share how they experienced this focused attention activity.



4 5 . S W I M M I N G I N T H E C L O U D S

Have students lay on their bellies and move their arms and legs, breathing in and out five times; on the sixth breath, they should slowly relax their arms while still kicking their legs. On the seventh breath, they should stop kicking and lay still, imagining that the clouds are pulling them up into the sky. Tell them to imagine they're weightless and drifting or floating to their favorite place. They can imagine the colors and sounds as they breathe deeply for a minute.



4 6 . F O C U S I N G O N B A L A N C E

Ask students to stand on one foot, holding the other foot off the ground and keeping their balance. With each breath, they should try to lift their opposite leg and foot higher. Have them pay attention to how high they can lift each foot.

Switch sides and see if there is more balance on one side than the other.



[E]

4 7 . N O T C H E W I N G G U M

Give each student a piece of gum and have them hold it in their mouth for one minute without chewing, just feeling the sensation. Ask what they noticed as they tasted the gum but did not chew. After one minute, we can chew together and share sensations and feelings.



4 8 . V I S U A L I Z A T I O N

Feeling safe, peaceful, and connected with others can generate positive emotions and ease in critical thinking and problem-solving.

In our focused attention practices, we quiet the brain with safe place visualizations. The students sit quietly, closing their eyes as we verbally walk them into their favorite imaginative place. We then direct them to envision the sights, sounds, colors and feel of their own safe place. They can invite anyone they choose to be with them, or they can rest and enjoy this space on their own. This has been the favorite focused attention exercise of the students who practice this skill.



4 9 . S O U N D

For two minutes, have students close their eyes and listen to all the sounds around them. Once they have identified a sound, they capture it in their own way, such as envisioning a box around it or placing an imaginary X on it. Students then share and compare the sounds that they heard and captured.



[S]

50 . S O U N D F O C U S I N G

As we listen to a bell, chimes, or a lingering sound, focus on the sound, until you cannot hear it anymore and then raise your hand when the sound disappears.



5 1 . C R I N K L I N G P A P E R

With a sheet of scrap paper begin to crinkle it slowly one breath at a time. As you crinkle, inhale, and exhale crinkling the paper into a small ball. Now as you unfold the paper, take a pen and trace the lines you have created in the crinkles for 30 seconds! When the time is up, look at your lines and design.

What do you see? What did you create?



[S]

5 2 . T A P P I N G O R E F T

This is a very powerful focused attention practice that is backed by research and uses meridian points on our skin that have an abundance of nerve receptors. Tapping and taking deep breaths activate these nerve endings on these meridian points traveling to limbic structures in the brain that can calm the fight/ flight responses. See resources...



5 3 . H A N D E X E R C I S E S

With a small ball, marble, or rolled-up clay or playdough, we roll the ball between our palms and along our fingers as we take deep breaths for one minute. It is important to roll the ball up to the fingertips and back down along our palms. We can even substitute a pen or pencil to roll between our hands. This movement inside our hands stimulates the receptors in our fingers and this activation travels to our brains.



5 4 . C O T T O N B A L L B R E A T H I N G

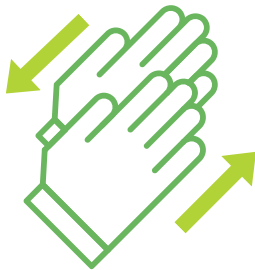
With a cotton ball, we place this on our palm where our wrist meets our hands.

With gentle breaths, we try to blow the cotton ball to the tips of our fingers without blowing it off! This is not COVID-19 friendly but can be a practice we can do outside, or students can do this at home!



5 5 . P A L M R U B

In this FoAP, we begin to slowly rub our palms together increasing the speed for one minute. We continue to breathe with gradual and then a rapid movement for one minute and at the end, we release our palms and raise our arms in a V shape above our heads taking three long deep breaths. What sensations do you experience? How do you feel?



5 6 . S P A R K L E R B R E A T H

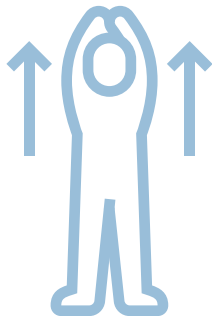
In this FoAP, we pretend we have a sparkler in each of our hands. As we deeply inhale, we raise our arms up in the air with our pretend sparklers and wave our sparklers around as we hold our breath for three or four seconds and then on the exhale, we lower our pretend sparklers into an imaginary bucket of water very slowly as we exhale through our mouths making a “sizzle” or snake sound” through our teeth! This is a long-extended exhale. As we lower our sparklers into the bucket of water, we begin to crouch down as our sparklers hit the water.



57 . TOUCH YOUR FINGERS

In this FoAP, as we inhale slowly, we bring our arms with our first finger pointed directly above our heads trying to touch each fingertip.

As we exhale for a long breath, we lower our arms. We might try thumb to thumb or pinky finger to pinky finger. Trying this practice a few times and looking straight ahead will help us be more focused and attentive.



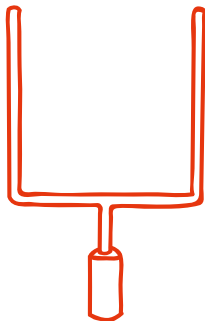
5 8 . S H A K E I T U P !

In this FoAP, we begin shaking our bodies one part at a time. We begin with our wrists and then arms and then legs and even our heads as we breathe in and out with every move. This FoAP strengthens the nervous system and circulation of blood flow.



5 9 . T H E R I D E

As we stand with our feet apart, we raise our arms like goalposts on a football field, and very slowly, we move from side to side. With every breath, we move a little faster and we can even try and close our eyes feeling the movement, rhythm, and the air around us! This FoAP energizes the nervous system!



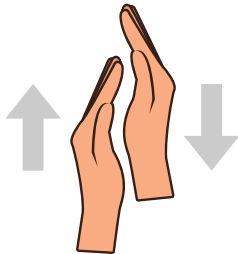
6 0 . D R I V I N G T H E C A R

Standing with our feet three feet apart, we stretch our arms out in front of us with elbows locked, as we make a fist with our thumbs inside our fists. We begin to drive this fast car as we turn our head and upper body from side-to-side, beginning slowly and speeding up as we inhale and exhale from side to side. It is as if we are moving the steering wheel of our fast car with us from side to side.



6 1 . S L I D I N G P A L M S

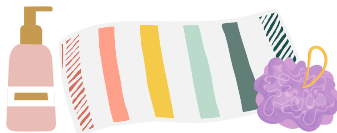
In this FoAP, we bring our hands together with our palms touching, at eye level. With a deep inhale, we slide one hand down with our fingertips stopping in the center of our opposite hand's palm. On the exhale, we curl our fingers around the hand that just slid down our opposite hand. We move back and forth sliding our palms and, on the exhale, grasping our fingers. We repeat this 10 times inhaling and exhaling.



6 2 . B R A I N / S E N S O R Y B A T H

Gather a group of three or four children into an area of the room with a large beach towel, a bath-time luffa, a tube of lotion, and plenty of smiles and curiosity. Students can choose to take their own luffa and press it on their arms and legs pretending to scrub and clean, or they can choose an adult to give them the sensory bath. Model this activity as you begin by pretending to step into a warm, sudsy tub. Have everyone sit down together and sing in rhythm, “We’re taking a brain bath, a brain bath, a brain bath, we’re taking a brain bath to help us feel_____!”

Have students choose different words to fill in a sensation or feeling (happy, bubbly, fresh, clean, peaceful, etc.). Once everyone has patted the luffa up and down their arms and legs and on top of their heads, pretend to carefully step out of the tub. One at a time, wrap up each child tightly in the oversized beach towel while swaying and rocking back and forth, continuing to sing. This time singing about drying off and feeling ready for the day. Students can then select a drop of hand lotion to massage on their hands, leaving the area with three deep breaths as they enter their day of learning.



6 3 . D R A W I N G T O T H E F L U T E

As we listen to the sounds of a flute or any instrument, we begin to draw images and breathe deeply to the sounds, rhythms, and anything we hear in the music.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7H_9D8Co7U



6 4 . P O W E R P O S E

Choose a power pose that feels good to you. You could stand, sit, or create a core pose, and in that pose, for 30 seconds, take deep breaths frozen in this stance. As you stand in this pose, think of the strengths and powers you have that help you move through each day! You can create a warrior, core or sitting/standing pose and as you breathe in deeply, freeze your body in this pose. As you breathe deeply, listen to the powerful drums that are reminding you of your “power.” Share with one another after the practice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LznxZDX7fo4>



6 5 . B R E A T H E L I K E A F L O W E R

...Breathe like a bear ...Breathe like a lion...breathe like a... make it up!
Talk about all the fun ways an object, an animal, or character you know breathes! You could even create Tik-Tok videos to share these breathing practices.



[S]

6 6 . T R A C I N G A H A N D

Have students take a marker, crayon, or pen and trace their nondominant hand on a sheet of paper without lifting the pen as many times as they can until they begin to feel calmer. They should focus on their breathing during this activity.



6 7 . S T E A M R O L L E R

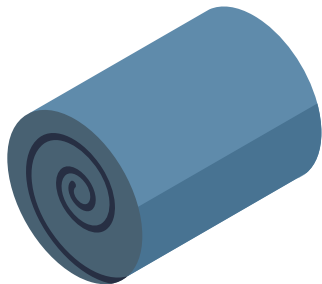
This strategy is helpful for children who do not like to be touched directly yet need some deep pressure to calm an activated nervous system.

The children lie on their tummies with their arms spread wide, and we roll a large exercise ball up their bodies from their feet to their heads while we sing about a steamroller. Then we roll it side to side down one arm and then the other. This is calming and rhythmic, and the children love to sing while we implement this strategy.



6 8 . B U R R I T O

Combining rhythm and gentle but firm pressure like the steamroller, the burrito is helpful for body awareness. Children lie down on a blanket, and we slowly roll them up so that the blanket is wound around them, providing nice pressure. When they're ready, we unroll with a little speed as the children pretend to roll down a hill.



69 . P E A C E F U L B R U S H I N G

This has been one of the children's favorite calming and regulating strategies that we recently began implementing. We sit in a circle as I model peaceful brushing, circling my face and ears with a makeup brush—we have a variety of these brushes. I then brush my arms, hands, and palms. Next, I brush areas of the children's faces, necks, arms, and hands. Many of them do not want me to stop. Some of the children brush their own peaceful spots. This light touch is stimulating in a gentle way—it's a very effective strategy before naptime and during transitions, as well as when students first arrive at school or end the day.



[S]

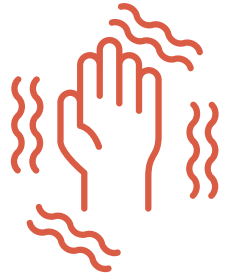
70 . T R A U M A & T E N S I O N R E L E A S I N G E X E R C I S E

In these exercises, we squeeze different muscle groups and then release and shake them out. We begin by scrunching our faces tight and then releasing those muscles. We make fists with our hands and then slowly release them, shaking them out. We repeat this contraction and release with our shoulders, legs, and arms, and then scrunch down in a pretend bear cave to get as small as we can before releasing all our muscle groups and growing big and tall once again. Trauma and Tension Releasing Exercises (TRE) are intended to release pent- up stress and anxiety in the body. These exercises stimulate the body's innate tremor mechanism and target the psoas muscles, which are our fight-flight muscles in the pelvic region. Children's nervous systems are still developing, and these exercises are gentle enough to produce a bit of contraction and then release, allowing the child or adolescent to feel the sensations in their bodies.



Fast = Charge. Fast movements activate the nervous system, producing possibly pent up energy.

Slow = Recovery. Lower, more intentional movements slow down our nervous system, activating a parasympathetic response.



Contracting and Stretching

1. We crunch and release our toes 5 times; then we rotate our ankles.
2. Standing, we rise up on our toes 5–10 times and then release. Recovery is sitting down and shaking out the calves.
3. We work our quads and hamstrings with a chair pose. We squat 5–10 times and then stretch by pulling our leg behind us.
4. We can place a ball between our legs, squeeze it tight, and then release to produce a charge and release.

[E]

71 . T O N G U E T A L K I N G

Loosely place your tongue on the roof of your mouth and begin to speak without moving your tongue from this position. Create a class chant to say together. Since this can be an awkward exercise, the teacher should be prepared to go first, modeling the activity, and breaking the ice!



7 2 . W A K I N G U P T H E B O W L

Patterned, repetitive activity that works with our body's rhythms and senses is calming to a child's nervous system. The Tibetan singing bowl is a part of our morning circle time—students listen to the sound the bowl creates, and we collectively try to match that sound with humming, chanting, or creating our own sounds to match the bowl. We begin by taking a long inhale and on the exhalation, we create a similar sound to the bowl or musical instrument we are using.



7 3 . W A L K T H E L I N E S

Movement and breath steady and ground the nervous system. We have created an adjustable labyrinth of colorful lines, shapes, and mazes with various types of footwork and animal walks that the children follow—walking, hopping, crawling, or skipping as indicated. We model the crab walk along the purple line, for example, and then the students follow. The students love to lead this exercise and often design patterns of movement that we mimic. This regulation strategy gives us a deep look into students' balance and gross and fine motor skills. We're also able to see their levels of frustration and how they respond to mistakes by redirecting their movements.



7 4 . B I L A T E R A L S C R I B B L I N G

This promotes emotional regulation and exercises sensory and motor systems needed for cognition. With a large sheet of paper and two markers one in each hand—students will follow your directives. Have them make random marks up and down, then horizontally. Next, have them make large arcs across the page, followed by large circles, first fast and then slowly. Finally, have them make dots all over the page. As they look at their drawings, ask them:

- Is there anything about this scribbling that resembles you or any part of you?
- Is there anything about this scribbling that is nothing like you?
- Are there any pictures or designs you see in this scribbling?
- What word comes to mind as you look at your scribbling? Would that word describe something about you or someone you know?



7 5 . A N I M A L S Y M B O L S

Have students view pictures or figures of animals and then choose an animal that they're most connected to, either positively or negatively—a totem, in Linda Chapman's terminology. After they choose, ask the following questions, and have students write out, draw, or verbally share their responses.

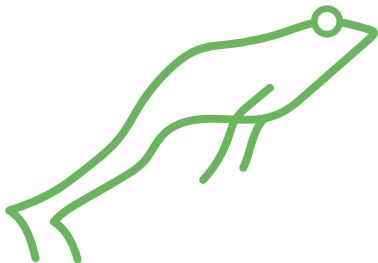
- What is it about this animal that you like or dislike?
- How is this animal like you in any way? How is this animal nothing like you?
- What are the two best qualities about this animal? What are the two worst qualities?
- What would the home of this animal look like?
- Who is in this animal's family, and do they get along with one another?
- If you could give this animal magic power, what would it be?

This exercise promotes connection and emotional regulation in a safe environment.



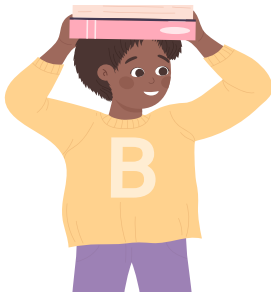
7 6 . F R O G B R E A T H S

Standing up with our heels touching and our toes pointed out, we squat down with our fingertips touching the floor. As we stand and then squat, our inhalation happens when we stand, and we exhale when we squat! Our goal is to try for 20! This exercise energizes us and strengthens the nervous system.



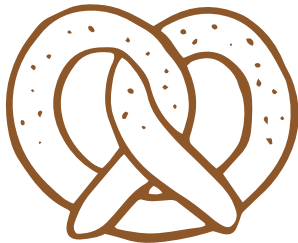
77 . B A L A N C I N G T H E P L A T E

With a light object such as a paper plate, cup, or even a book, we begin to balance this object on our heads with a variety of poses. We can begin walking, balancing on one leg, squatting down, or bending forward as we steady our heads! What other poses can you create?



7 8 . P R E T Z E L B R E A T H

With every deep breath in, we begin to curl one arm, leg, and our bodies into the shape of a pretzel. We extend our exhale before we begin to bend and curl the next part of our bodies. As we curl and bend into the shape of the pretzel, we are continually breathing and extending our exhale. Once we are in the shape of the pretzel, we begin to release and undo our shapes with each breath!



[S]



79 . V I S U A L I Z A T I O N [M Y S P E C I A L P L A C E]



In this FoAP, we begin with three deep breaths as we visualize our special place. The visualization begins: “If you are comfortable, close your eyes and imagine walking down a beautiful wooden staircase. At the bottom of this staircase is a large wooden door. As you open the door, you enter a beautiful room with all the smells, sights, and sounds you love!

What do you see? What colors, furniture, and decorations are in this room? What sounds do you hear? Is this room indoors or outdoors? Are some of your favorite people or animals in this space? What foods have been prepared for you?

You move around the room and find all that helps you to feel peaceful and calm. Take a minute and enjoy this space knowing you can come back here anytime you wish!”

After the students have explored this place, we guide them up the staircase and back into the classroom. The students can listen to music as we explore this place, and they are welcome to share their experiences following this FoAP.

80 . R O C K A N D R O L L A L O N G T H E S P I N E

For one minute, we roll back and forth along our spines breathing rhythmically with the back-and-forth motion. This FoAP energizes our bodies and brains and brings movement and rhythm into our day.



8 1 . P R E S E N T M O M E N T W A L K

In this FoAP, we begin a quiet walk with a pad of paper and a pen. As we What did you notice? Have you ever noticed that before in this school? What did we hear? What did we smell? Was there anything familiar to you that you remembered? What was new to you? How did these sensations make you feel? Did they bring up memories? Please write or draw your noticings.



What did you notice? Have you ever noticed that before in this school? What did we hear? What did we smell? Was there anything familiar to you that you remembered? What was new to you? How did these sensations make you feel? Did they bring up memories? Please write or draw your noticings.

8 2 . M I N D M A P S

In this FoAP, we begin to identify and draw our paths of emotions and sensations. What does your **fear** path look like? Who is on it? What experiences are on this path? Do you travel often or occasionally? Who is on your **joy** path? What experiences are on this path? What people do you meet on your joy path? What about your sadness path?

Is it traveled more often? What about an **anger** path? Who is on this path? What experiences? Do you have a **peaceful** path? What experiences and people are on this peaceful path? We have a choice of paths but sometimes the path we travel most often is the one that we automatically travel without thinking about the other paths. When we have intentional neuroplasticity, we begin to shift our thoughts and feelings so we can travel paths that feel more soothing or comforting but this takes time and practice! As we create our mind maps and feeling pathways, breathe deeply and notice what feels good to your body and brain! You are in control of where you want to go, even though it doesn't feel like it! Follow your instinct through drawing and writing.



83 . DEDICATE THIS ONE

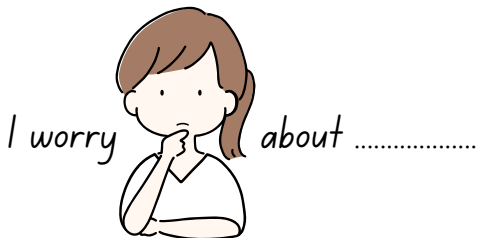
In this FoAP, we create an image or write down a few words that we want to share with someone we appreciate! As we think of this person, we breathe deeply for one minute sharing our love, hope, and any words of comfort to this person.

We dedicate our FoAP to another.



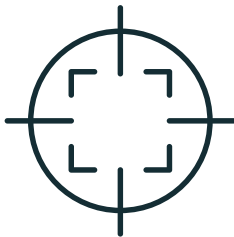
84 . G I V E M E Y O U R S & I ' L L G I V E Y O U M I N E

In this FoAP, we write down or draw a worry or concern we have and as we fold up the paper, we hand it to a friend. As we share our worries together, we breathe together for one-minute breathing in strength and love and breathing out this strength and love and power to our friend. It is a choice if we share these with one another and as a class, we will need to set guidelines and agreements for everyone!



8 3 . V I S I O N Q U E S T

In this FoAP, we begin to focus on one specific object in our room or within the setting where we are. Following our focused attention for 30 seconds, we begin to broaden our gaze and create a gentler more open vision of our setting which can directly impact our parasympathetic nervous system. When we broaden and gentle our vision, our heart rate lowers, respiration lowers, and blood pressure lowers!



8 4 . M E E T A W A R E N E S S

Just like in the movie Inside Out, we have another “gift” of feelings that can be one of our superpowers. “Awareness” occurs when we pay attention to the present moment. For example, “I am aware of my hands, wiggling my toes, my eyes opened and looking around, how my clothes and shoes feel, and anything else around me! With a focus on “awareness”, we can relieve our minds of the past and worries of the future. “In this moment, I am safe and feel my body and brain working for me.” This scene can also help us to focus on the sights and sounds of nature if it is too difficult to find something close to us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHACKCNDMW8>



8 5 . C L I M B I N G T H E M O U N T A I N

This FoAP can be done seated or taking a walk. We begin by imagining a mountain in front of us or we can watch this video of a variety of mountains from around the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYH5aoHHLrA>

We begin by discussing how mountains can mean much more than what we see or physically climb. We can feel mountains of challenges or a problem we experience can be a mountain we need to climb to experience the solution on the other side.

Questions: What mountain have you climbed recently? Was it difficult? What did you find on the other side of the mountain? Sometimes life brings us many mountains and to reach the solutions, answers, peacefulness, or calmness, we must climb that mountain to experience the answers or remedies. We can use our breath and/or movement to imagine our mountains of challenge and discuss how we can reach the other side. How can we use each other to help us climb? Who is your hiking stick? Do you have enough water? Are you warm and comfortable as you climb the mountain? There are so many variations you could create for this Focused Attention Practice.



[S]

8 6 . N I G H T S K Y

In this FoAP, we focus our vision on the nighttime stars. As we breathe deeply, we observe shapes, light, and the number of stars for a couple of minutes. At the end of this FAP, we can share our observations and how it felt to sit back and watch the twinkling stars.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFcDcZu4dR8>

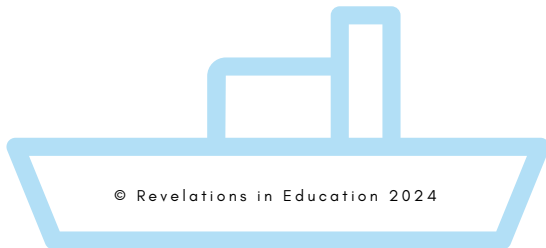
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTzULG9z5Zk>



8 7 . B O X A N D T H E B O A T

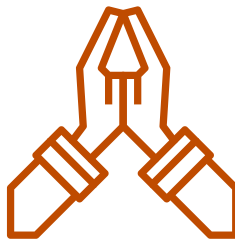
In this FoAP, we can write a worry or something that is troubling us on a piece of paper or even imagine this. We then place our worries into an imaginary or real wooden box and then we place the box into a boat that sails away. As we imagine this scene, we breathe in peacefulness and breathe out our worries. We can do this for a couple of minutes as we breathe deeply with the lifting away of sadness, worry, or an anxious time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cySBHyKZDsM>



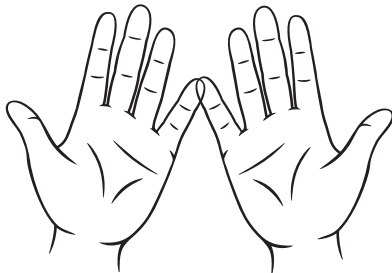
8 8 . F I N G E R A N D P A L M

In this practice raise your arms to shoulder height and place your palms together with your wrists touching. Spread your fingers wide, and as you breathe in, open your palms so your fingertips are touching. As you exhale bring your palms together again and repeat 10 times. This exercise activates the receptors in your fingertips which strengthens our focus and attention.



8 9 . B A C K W A R D S P A L M S

In this FoAP, we place our palms toward us with our pinky fingers touching and spreading our fingers. Our elbows are bent, and we have them shoulder height. As we take two warm-up breaths, we begin with our thumbs on the right hand and one by one we curl our fingers down in one long inhale. Then we exhale slowly beginning with the thumbs on the left hand, raising each finger with a long exhale. We repeat this exercise 5 to 10 times.



9 0 . H O R S E L I P S

Loosen your lips and blow... allow the air to wriggle your lips and do these with a large inhale and even bigger exhale. We can laugh, too, as we calm the brain stem areas where the stress response begins! How long can you keep your lips vibrating? Count the seconds with each other!



9 1 . R E G U L A T I N G W I T H Y O U R P A R T N E R

Choose a partner. Without talking, find a rhythm in your own breathing with your partner. Change it up!



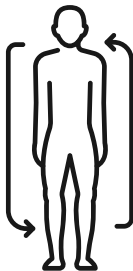
9 2 . F E E L I N G Y O U R B R E A T H

Place your fingers just an inch or two in front of your mouth. As you breathe in through your nose, inhale a shallow breath and feel the air, then exhale through your mouth. Now breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth as you blow up your belly with a deep diaphragm breath. Feel how much warmer this air is against your fingers.



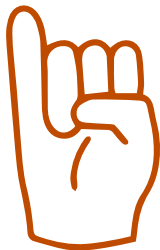
9 3 . B O D Y S C A N

Have students sit with their legs straight out and begin wiggling their toes and ankles, shaking knees and thighs, rotating shoulders, arms, and finally their heads, keeping all body parts moving at the same time. Then reverse the process and stop moving heads, arms, shoulders, and on down. This sequence also promotes working memory.



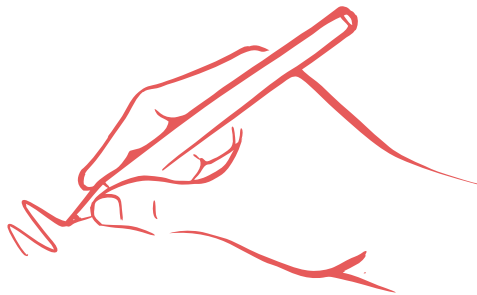
9 4 . F I N G E R R A I S E S

Inhale and lift the forefinger of your left hand, then lower this finger as you exhale. Go through these breathing movements raising and lowering each finger on both hands. You can use other parts of your body to match the inhale and exhale with 10 deep breaths, always exhaling a bit longer than the inhale.



9 5 . D R A W I N G Y O U R B R E A T H

Take a moment and notice how you breathe.
Do you notice the rhythm? A pattern? A pace?
Try to draw your breathing.



[E]

9 6 . G U E S S T H E S O U N D

Play a sound (running water, animal sounds, construction, etc.) and have students guess the sound and three ways they have used it or seen it!! Write our responses in the chat, whiteboard or on paper.



9 7 . R E V E A L

Bring an object to zoom on or in the classroom that is covered with a towel or cloth. Hold the covered object with just a small part being revealed in front of the students and with every deep breath they take, you begin to peel back a piece of the cloth, revealing a bit more of the object!

After a few deep breaths, they should now see a part of it and can begin guessing in the chat box! How is this object related to our content or SEL?

Students will love the anticipation and deep breaths!



9 8 . M U S C L E R E L A X E R

In this FoAP, we begin in a comfortable seated position. Directly under our earlobes are two large muscles, one on each side of the neck. You can feel these by placing your fingers directly below your earlobes and tracing them down to the clavicle bone at the center of your upper chest. These muscles hold tension and are also known as our fight/flight muscles. As we begin to trace these muscles with pressure down to our clavicle bone, breathing deeply, we begin feeling some relaxation in our head, neck, shoulders, and back. We can also begin at the back of our necks with our hands moving around our neck toward those muscles down to the clavicle bone.

When we practice deep breaths and apply comfortable pressure to these muscles a few times each day, our nervous systems respond well, lowering our heart rates, blood pressure, and respiration.



99 . M I R R O R D R U M M I N G

In this FoAP, students work with a partner to choose a rhythmic sequence beat, drumming on a tabletop or their own legs as their partner mimics the pattern. Students then switch leads and repeat a sequence of rhythmic beats. This is energizing and can help with focus, offering fun and movement along with the rhythmic benefits of co-regulating our nervous systems together.



100. PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

This FoAP is easy and effective for relieving tension and stress. The fun fact about this practice is that we do it often without thinking. Now, let's try it with intention. We take two short nose inhales, much like we do when sniffing an odor. We follow those two fast, short inhales with a long mouth exhale. We can try this a few times and sense how it feels to our nervous system.

In this practice, we release carbon dioxide with our long exhalation. If we do not purposefully release the carbon dioxide in our nervous system, it creates agitation. These breaths can be used whenever you feel anxious, worried, or overwhelmed.

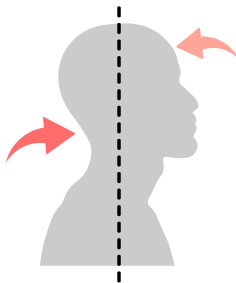


[S]

1 0 1 . H O L D S T I L L

This is a wonderful breath to steady us and help us feel grounded and calm. We place our dominant hand on our forehead. We place our other hand on the back of our neck. Three long, deep breaths with this comforting pressure on our heads and necks will help us feel held and still.

This is a great FoAP to do during or after a long or hard day.



1 0 2 . B R E A T H I N G W I T H Y O U R S U P E R H E R O / M O N S T E R

In this FoAP, we imagine that we're a superhero or monster and create a fun breath that our superhero or monster would love! Maybe it is a slow, long breath, or a fast- energizing breath. Maybe there is a funny sound with your breath or a rhythm to the breath? You get to choose. We can teach our breath to our classmates. Can you draw your breath with lines, shapes, or colors?



1 0 3 . C H E E K B R E A T H I N G

In this FoAP, we place our hands on our cheeks and take three or four deep breaths. We can warm up our hands before placing them on our cheeks by rubbing our palms together fast for 10–20 seconds. We can also try placing our cold hands on our cheeks by running our hands under cold water or holding an ice cube for a few seconds. Maybe just placing our hands on our cheeks without a temperature change feels best. It's fun to try different ways and see which practice feels best.



1 0 4 . C R E A T I N G A H O M E

This FoAP is all about the imagination: drawing, coloring, and designing our superheroes' or monsters' homes. What would that home look like? What shape? What colors? Who else lives there? Are there pets? Is it in the city or a special neighborhood? Is it huge or small? Is there furniture or decorations? Is it high up in a tree or on the ground? Have fun creating with your brilliant nervous system!



1 0 5 . F I N G E R H O L D A N D H A N D M A S S A G E

Our hands and fingers have over 3,000 nerve receptors which can hold tension and contraction that reflect how our nervous systems are experiencing overwhelm and dysregulation. As we hold and squeeze each finger with a long, slow breath, we begin to notice how the exhale can release some of the tightness and discomfort. We can breathe through one hand or, if there's time, we can breathe through both hands. After the finger holds, we take two long, deep breaths as we massage our hands from the wrist to the fingertips.



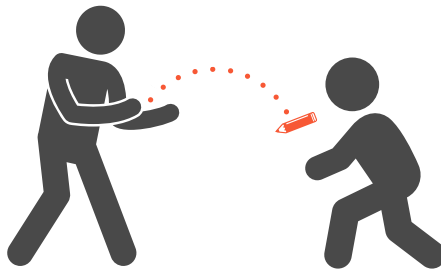
1 0 6 . P O S T I T C O L L A B O R A T I O N S

In small groups of 4–6 students or staff, we ask each person to draw a shape, line, or design of any kind on a blank post-it note. As a group, we decide who goes first. The first person holds up their post-it note and begins to tell a story about their shape, line, or design. The next person holds up their post-it note and continues the story with their own design, shape, or line. We move through the group, each person contributing to a fun story. Another challenge is seeing who can recall the entire group story after everyone has shared their piece.



1 0 7 . P E N T O S S

In this practice, each student has a pen, pencil, or marker. With a partner, standing 3–4 feet apart, we begin tossing and catching the pen. This FoAP lets us attune to the rhythm and timing of tossing and catching with our partner. It energizes us to focus on the movement and rhythm this practice requires.



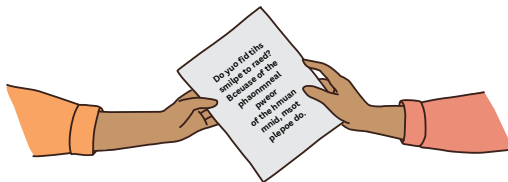
1 0 8 . D U A L D R A W I N G S

In this practice, with a partner and one sheet of paper, we take turns drawing a line or shape, silently passing the paper back and forth for one minute. When the minute is up, we can talk, laugh, and explore what we created together. This FoAP is a fun way to build cooperation and collaboration.



1 0 8 . D U A L S T O R I E S

Much like dual drawings, we can write out a sentence, draw a picture, or verbally share a sentence. Then we take turns with a partner adding to our stories for 3–5 minutes. This practice can be completed in a variety of ways, and each set of partners can decide what feels best and is most enjoyable.



1 0 9 . P H Y S I C A L G R O U N D I N G

Within a two- to five-minute time frame, we touch as many objects around us as we can without leaving our seats. We notice their textures, colors, weight, and anything that grabs our attention. We can hold the objects or write about them. Then, let's compare with a classmate or in a small group discussion.



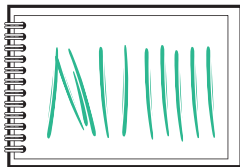
1 1 0 . P A P E R T E A R I N G

We each take a piece of paper. We will set a timer for two minutes. In that time, tear the paper into as many pieces as possible. The more pieces the better, so let's be very intentional about how we tear and how many pieces we can create. When the time is up, we count the pieces while noticing any shapes we recognize among them. Maybe there's a cloud, an animal shape, or an object that looks familiar.



1 1 1 . D R A W I N G Y O U R B R E A T H (V E R S I O N 2)

In this FoAP, we will take a marker or pen and with each inhale we draw a line vertically or horizontally across a blank sheet of paper. With the exhalation, we continue to draw another line vertically or horizontally without looking at the paper. We can close our eyes or find a focus point to look at as we draw our lines that reflect our inhales and exhales. We do this for about a minute or taking 5 to 10 deep inhales and exhales. When the time is up, we look at our breath! What do you see? Are the lines longer or shorter for inhales? Are their shapes? Does your breath mirror how you are feeling right now? Give your breath artwork a title



1 1 2 . A N C H O R B R E A T H

Before we create a “body anchor,” and begin breathing, think about the purpose of an anchor! What does an anchor do? Why are anchors important? Why do people need anchors in our lives? What could these look like? Now, in a chair, standing, or on the floor, mold or share your body into an anchor. After you have found the shape of an anchor with your entire body figured into this position, begin to breathe deep into your belly with long slow exhales. Nothing should be moving on your body except for your belly!



1 1 3 . P A I N T I N G O U R B R E A T H

In this FoAP, we will need a blank sheet of paper or a paper plate, a straw, and a few dabs of paint! Each students will choose a couple of colors of paint, and we place these on paper or plates. As we take a deep inhale we then exhale through the straw with long slow breaths as the paint moves across the paper or plate. It is important to not exhale too hard as we can become lightheaded! With each breath our designs unfold and we can see our breath through these colors!



[S]

1 1 4 . B I L A T E R A L B R E A T H I N G

In this FoAP, we use our breath while we are tapping on our shoulders, alternating sides, and rhythm. We can tap to the rhythm of our breath on our upper chest, shoulders, thighs or by tapping our feet one at a time as we breathe to the rhythm of our breaths! See photos. We are stimulating each hemisphere in the brain and settling our fight/ flight responses while activating our parasympathetic pathways of the nervous system.



[S]

1 1 5 . S N A I L B R E A T H I N G

Sitting on our bottoms with our legs out in front of us.

Take a deep breath, slowly bend our legs with our feet flat on the floor, hands are on our knees as we slowly lean back to form a “C” with our bodies. As we lean forward slowly inhale arching our backs and then slowly leaning back into the “C” position with a long slow exhale. This is a long slow deep breath and movement practice as we move our torso with our breath.



1 1 6 . H O L D I N G T I G H T

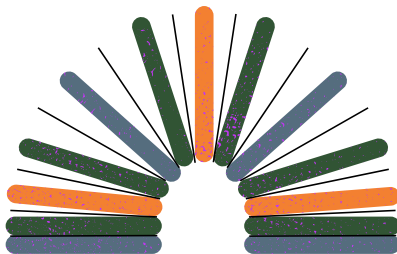
Just as infants and young children, we too need to be held and rocked all through our lives. In this FoAP, we fold our arms across our chest holding our upper arms firmly. Sitting on the floor or a chair, we begin to rock from side to side while taking deep breaths! We can also change the direction of our movement as we rock forwards and back holding firmly to our safe grounded presence. This practice is all about movement, breath, and the power of rocking as and focus.



[S]

1 1 7 . S L I N K Y B R E A T H

If you do not have a slinky, imagine one! As we breathe in, we pull our hands apart, just a little as we inhale and close our hands with our exhale. With each repetition we take longer and deeper inhales and exhales as we stretch the slinky out as far as it will stretch!



1 1 8 . S N O W G L O B E B R E A T H I N G

In this FoAP, we will observe a shaken snow globe watching the snow float around and fall on the inside of the globe. Take a few deep breaths as you watch the snow settle inside the globe. Now, as we shake the globe for a second time, imagine you are one of the flakes of snow. Watch yourself float around inside the globe.

How does this feel? What do you see? What sounds are heard? Describe your travels inside the snow globe! You may draw or write down your responses!



1 1 9 . B L A N K E T B R E A T H I N G

With a blanket of your choice, wrap up as tightly as you can. When you feel comfortable and warm, begin taking a deep breath, and release a little piece of the blanket with that breath. Notice any sensations as you breathe and begin to unwrap. With another deep breath, unwrap a little more, or in other words, loosen another section of the blanket. As you take deep breaths, notice the sensations as the blanket begins to unwrap.



1 2 0 . P O P R O C K S E N S A T I O N

E- In this FoAP, we begin by placing a handful of pop rocks on our tongues. (We do this together as a class.) For one minute, we feel the sensations in our mouths focusing on how we are experiencing these sensations. After one minute, we share our experiences with our class comparing those sensations to a variety of things, such as popcorn, tingling, a rainstorm, etc.)

