

Movement Breaks



All children need to move their bodies – indeed, atherosclerosis begins to set in after one hour of sitting still. Children need to move about 10 minutes out of every hour, not only to prevent vascular damage but to increase dopamine levels (which in turn increases attention and motivation) and oxygenate the brain. While some children with ADHD cannot learn at all without movement breaks, ALL children learn better when given regular opportunities to move.

So what can teachers do?

Provide 2-5 minute breaks interspersed throughout the lesson. Make it part of the daily routine to normalize it – it should not be that only some children get a chance to move, or that a child ever feels singled out. Set a timer to go off every twenty minutes, and respect it. When it sounds, all children stand and start to move. Have children brainstorm movement ideas and pick a different activity for each the day of the week. Try connecting memorization to the activities, like the state capitols or the times tables! If you know that children have been sitting a lot in other classes or assemblies that day, consider sacrificing a longer time to help them recover and learn.

Sample ideas

- Jumping jacks
- Hang a piece of yarn above each desk and jump to try to hit it
- Reaching high, move right hand to left toe, left hand to right toe, repeat x20
- Everybody up, jog the perimeter of the room, race back to your seat
- Put on music, dance for the length of one song
- Turn chair around, step up and down (while skip counting a times table!!)
- Right elbow to left knee, left elbow to right knee, getting knees up high x15
- Jog in place
- Shake the sillies out
- Deep belly breath, jump, and YELL (try a positive affirmation!!)