Brain Breaks

Brain breaks are mental and physical activities to break up a period of concentration.

These may be particularly useful after spending long periods sitting or using technology. The brain break may be relaxing or energising but they intend to get the body and mind going and re-focus the participants.

Depending on the age of the children they could be used every hour or less for around five minutes. Try to use a variety, and fit them well to the mood and situation. For example, you should choose an active brain break if the previous activity is sedentary, or a maths-related one if you have been studying a different topic.

MENTALLY HEALTHY SCHOOLS
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Switch

This activity is akin to Simon Says as it is a follow-my-action game.

Begin by introducing an action e.g. rubbing your stomach, and have the children copy you. After 10-20 seconds, change your action, for example switch to jumping, but the children continue with the first action. They will continue with this until you change your action for a second time and say 'switch'. At this point, the class will switch to your second action and you will start a third action – for example clicking your fingers.

Continue changing the action each time you say switch, 10 to 20 seconds apart. The children should always be one action behind you although you could extend this to two actions behind. It may also be good for the children to take turns leading this.

Invisible tennis/catch

It's best to do this activity outside if you can. Split the class into pairs and spread out. Tell each pair they have an invisible ball (and bats if you want to do the tennis version) and that they should try and do a rally between them, batting or throwing and catching the invisible ball.

Model the activity for the children, being as active and varied as possible in your throws, returns and catches to get the body moving and circulation going.

Shape search

Get everybody on their feet. When you call out the name of a particular shape, everybody has to search the room and go and stand by an object of that shape (which can link to Maths objectives). This could be interchanged with colours.

Active numbers

Spread the children out in the classroom or outside space where possible. Explain that you are going to rehearse some counting but that on certain numbers you will do different actions.

One child is to pick the action and another the number pattern - e.g. hop on multiples of five, or star jump on square numbers.

Begin counting from any given number and walk in time to the counting. When you get to a number the rule applies to the children must do the replacement action e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4 – hop!

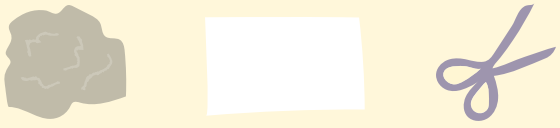
Where children's ability is higher you could bring in further rules, like hopping on multiples of five but squatting when it is also a multiple of 10. If space is lacking, this could be replaced with a sound instead of an action.

Coordination switch

Hold your right ear with your left hand and hold your nose with your right hand. Begin slowly switching these around so that you are then holding your left ear with your right hand and your nose with your left hand. Slowly increase the pace trying to maintain coordination. Allow pupils to do this at their own speed.

Dance, dance, dance

Select a song that the children enjoy and play it aloud. Select a child to begin as the dance instructor and ask them to perform a simple repeating motif for the class to copy. Pause and swap in a new instructor, and repeat until the end of the song.

Rock, paper, scissors

Split the class into pairs and play the traditional game of rock, paper, scissors. For a twist, ask the pairs to create their own three items, invent a new rule or as a class create a new version of the game linked to their learning topic.