Brain break cards: Calm and breathing

Cut along the dashed lines. Page 1 of 2. Laminate them, or keep them on a ring.

CALM AND BREATHING — 1 min

Balloon Breath

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Rest your hands on your tummy. Breathe in slowly through your nose and feel your tummy rise like a balloon. Breathe out slowly and let it go down. Five slow breaths.

Adapt: Anyone who finds breathing exercises uncomfortable simply sits quietly instead.

CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Square Breathing

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Trace a square on the desk with one finger. Breathe in for 4 along the top, hold for 4 down the side, breathe out for 4 along the bottom, hold for 4 back up. Four squares.

Adapt: Younger children count to 3 and can leave out the holds.

CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Five Senses Check

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Quietly notice 5 things you can see, 4 you can hear, 3 you can touch, 2 you can smell and 1 thing you like about today. Share one with a partner, or keep them to yourself.

Adapt: Swap senses freely: a student who is blind might notice 5 sounds and 4 textures.

CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Slow Stretch

Beside desks · Quiet · Chair OK

Reach up tall and hold for 3 breaths. Lean gently to the left, then the right. Roll your shoulders back 5 times. Let your arms hang loose and give them a soft shake.

Adapt: Every stretch works sitting in a chair; stop at any stretch that feels sore.

CALM AND BREATHING — 1 min

Hand Trace

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Spread one hand flat on the desk. Slide a finger of the other hand up each finger as you breathe in and down as you breathe out. Five fingers, five slow breaths.

Adapt: Trace a hand drawn on paper if touching your own hand is uncomfortable.

CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Sound Hunt

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Sit still with eyes closed or looking down. For one minute, count the different sounds you can hear: in the room, in the building, outside. Then share the farthest sound anyone heard.

Adapt: For students who are Deaf, play "colour hunt": count the shades of one colour around the room.

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CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Squeeze and Let Go

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Squeeze your hands into fists for a slow count of 5, then let go. Shoulders up to your ears, then drop them. Curl your toes, then relax. Notice how "letting go" feels.

Adapt: Skip any part of the body that hurts; hands alone are enough.

CALM AND BREATHING — 3 min

Picture a Cloud

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Read slowly: "You are lying on soft grass, watching clouds drift by. One cloud slowly changes shape..." Pause for a minute of quiet. Then everyone has 30 seconds to draw the cloud they saw.

Adapt: Children who would rather not close their eyes look out of a window or at a plain wall.

CALM AND BREATHING — 2 min

Slow Motion

Beside desks · Quiet · Chair OK

Do an everyday action in super slow motion: pick up a pencil, tie a shoe, wave hello, take a bite of an apple. The smoothest, slowest mover chooses the next action.

Adapt: Any action works, including ones with just the face or one hand.

CALM AND BREATHING — 1 min

Thank-You Minute

At your desk · Quiet · Chair OK

Think of someone who helped you this week: a friend, a family member, someone at school. Say a silent thank you. Then write or draw them on a sticky note for the class thank-you wall.

Adapt: Drawing, a word or a single letter on the note all count.