

Table-Top Brain Breaks

Simple regulation moves for pupils to use at their desks to reset, refocus and feel ready to learn

5 sequenced activities to reawaken, activate & energise, organise & focus, ground and soothe, calm and relax



Table-Top Brain Breaks



Reawaken



grip and tap knee

Energise



lift feet, touch head

Organise



thumb to finger taps

Focus



rotate alternate feet

Calm



4,7,8 breathing



Table-Top Brain Breaks

What are table-top brain breaks?

A table-top brain break is a short, structured regulation activity that pupils can complete while seated at their desk. These movements are deliberately small, quiet, and predictable, making them ideal for classrooms where pupils need a moment to reset without leaving their space. They help the brain shift from overwhelm or distraction into a calmer, more organised state.

Why are brain breaks important?

Table-top brain breaks support pupils to regulate their nervous system, especially during moments of cognitive overload, emotional dysregulation, or sensory fatigue. They offer a quick, accessible way for children to feel grounded and ready to re-engage with learning. For many pupils with SEND, trauma histories, or anxiety, these micro-breaks can be the difference between escalation and recovery.

A simple 5-part regulation pathway

- Alert - Gently bring the brain online
- Energise - Increase alertness and body readiness
- Organise - Settle the body and sequence the brain
- Focus - Direct attention and thinking
- Calm - Restore regulation ready for learning

Ten benefits of brain breaks

1. Reduces stress and anxiety by calming the nervous system
2. Improves focus and attention, helping pupils return to learning
3. Supports emotional regulation through predictable, soothing movements
4. Builds interoceptive awareness as pupils notice their breathing and body signals
5. Provides sensory input without overwhelming the environment
6. Increases working memory capacity by giving the brain a brief reset
7. Enhances executive functioning such as planning and self-monitoring
8. Promotes independence as pupils learn strategies they can use anytime
9. Reduces classroom disruptions by offering proactive regulation
10. Creates a calmer learning culture where wellbeing is embedded, not added on



Additional Table-Top Brain Breaks

Hands & Fine Motor

- Hand massage (slow pressure across palm and fingers)
- Slow finger curls (one at a time, then release)

Movement & Stretch

- Seated twist (gentle rotation)
- Shoulder rolls (forward and backward)
- Ear-to-shoulder stretch (slow, controlled)

Strength & Grounding

- Palm press (hands together, firm pressure)
- Foot pushes (press into the floor)

Breathing & Regulation

- Rainbow breathing (trace an arc while breathing)
- Pencil breathing (trace up/down with inhale/exhale)

Sensory & Awareness

- Five-sense check-in (5-4-3-2-1 grounding)
- Colour spotting (find 5 items of a chosen colour)

Release & Reset

- Desk drumming (quiet rhythmic tapping)
- Mini-visualisation (imagine a calm place or colour)

Table-Top Brain Breaks



Alert

Energise

Organise

Focus

Calm

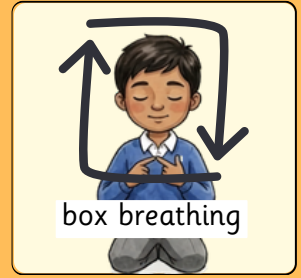
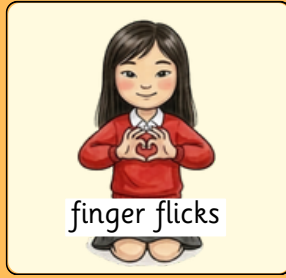
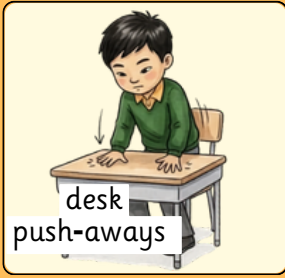


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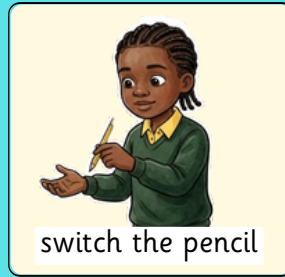
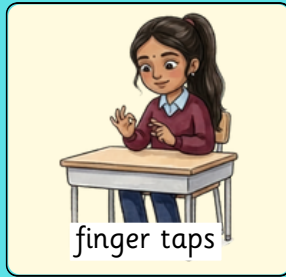
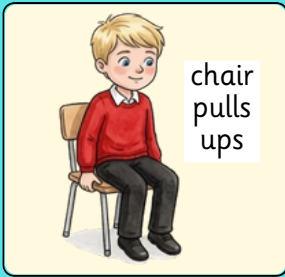
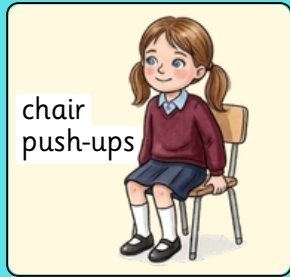


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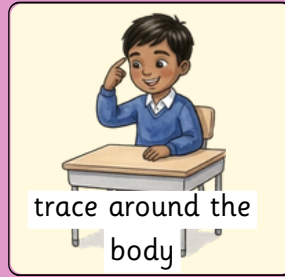
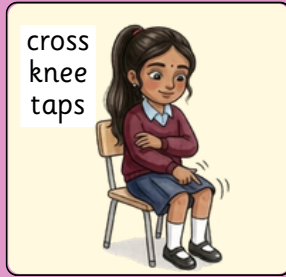
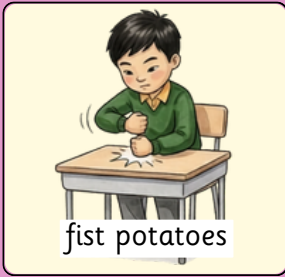


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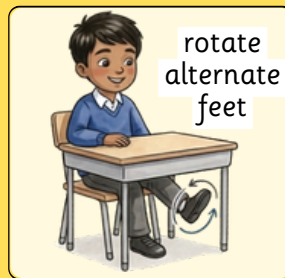


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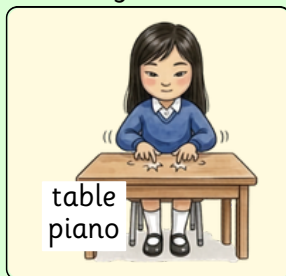
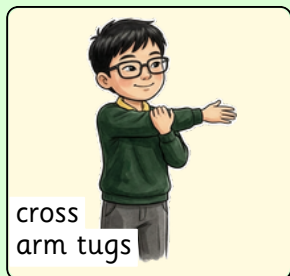
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Inclusive education through brain-based learning

BrainBuildingStudio



TikTok



Visual Stress Backgrounds

12 coloured backgrounds to reduce the visual contrast and glare of use white boards.

Children experiencing visual stress often expend significant mental energy simply trying to make sense of what they see, this is an effective tool to support learning.

Emotion Thermometers

Zones of Regulation Visuals

A simple sliding scale for children to represent their emotions and pre plan how the strategies they can use to calm and regulate.

Also includes a blank thermometer for children who see and fee different colours for each zone

Help Me Hand

Classroom communication card

Support communication with a clear visual for asking for help. This Canva template allows you to use the existing themes or create your own in a topic of choice

OTHER TITLES

Sequence Builder

Sequencing movement to strengthen bodies, coordination and brains.

7 movement-based games designed to support children's coordination, motor development, working memory and self-regulation through structured, playful action sequences

Bilateral Boost

Coordination Activities for Learning, Focus & Self-Regulation

20 Brain-Boosting Bilateral Activities to Strengthen Movement, Focus, and Control

My Support Team

Five finger prompt for 5 key adults

Ask the child to name 5 key adults, who they trust. Upload the photos and drag them to the photo place holders. Practice which finger represents which adult to use in times of stress or worry

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