

EXERCISE ACTIVITY

BRAIN BREAK FOR GRADES K-5

Title: Exercise Brain Break Activity

Setting: In Classroom or on Video Conference

Time Frame: 15 Minutes

Paired Dana Foundation Fact Sheet: 3rd-5th Grade How Does the Brain Work?

ACTIVITY DETAILS

Teacher Background:

Exercise is good for your overall health—including your brain! According to experts, the recommended amount of exercise to keep your mind sharp is about an hour a day. As your heart rate increases during exercise, blood flow to the brain increases. In addition, because your brain is more active carrying out the exercise, the blood flows more easily into the tissue of the brain. Both of these mechanisms allow your brain to be exposed to more oxygen and nutrients.

Exercise also induces the release of beneficial proteins in the brain. These nourishing proteins keep nerve cells, also known as neurons, healthy and promote their growth. Neurons are the working building blocks of the brain. As a result, individual neuron health is important to overall brain health.

When you exercise, neurons in the brain release chemicals such as dopamine and endorphins that make you feel happy. Not only are your neurons dumping out feel-good chemicals, but exercise also helps your brain get rid of chemicals that make you feel stressed and anxious. In addition, exercise has been shown to improve memory, attention, and sleep by helping new connections form in the brain.

For more information on how exercise affects the brain, visit <https://dana.org/article/how-does-exercise-affect-the-brain/>.

Procedure:

1. Either have students read, or read aloud, paired Dana Foundation Fact Sheet: 3rd-5th Grade How Does the Brain Work? Downloadable here: <https://on.dana.org/factsheets-kids>. (5 min)
2. Show the accompanying PowerPoint slide, and explain how exercise is good for the brain. (5 min)
3. Pick a song for students (or have them pick one!).
4. Explain the concept of Freeze Dance. The students will stand up (or may choose to remain seated) and make sure they have enough room to move freely. The teacher will play a song, and the students will dance either in their chairs or standing up. When the song stops, the students must freeze in position. (5 min)
5. The teacher should encourage students to move their entire bodies—legs, torso, arms, head, etc.—when dancing, enabling them to activate many areas of their brain during the activity.
6. Finish the activity by pointing out that not only was that dance exercise good for their brain, but their brain helped them hear the music, see each other dance, and move their bodies!

