



BRAIN BREAKS



Brain breaks, a time that focuses on giving your mind a rest by doing something enjoyable, like listening to music, going for a walk, doing a puzzle, or having a snack. Having short brain breaks during work time has been shown to have real benefits. They reduce stress, anxiety, fatigue, and frustration and increase attention and productivity. The key is to take them before fatigue, distraction, or lack of focus set in.

Below are a couple of ways to have a brain break, either alone or with a whole class.



Stretches

You may take a moment to move your muscles. Yoga poses, either in our seats, standing by our desks, or on the carpet, are a great way to get the blood and oxygen flowing. Simple forearm and neck exercises are helpful for employee physical and mental health.

[Workout in the Classroom- Go with YoYo!](#)



Laugh out Loud

Sharing a joke with your class before starting an assignment or with a peer during lunchtime will allow you to smile and laugh. Laughing decreases stress hormones like cortisol, increases happy hormones like serotonin and endorphins, and releases physical anxiety and muscle tension. [71 Jokes for Kids to Tell at School](#)

Get Artistic

Dedicate time for a "doodle challenge," set a couple of minutes to draw a picture or write words on post-it notes. Playing some music during doodle time can stimulate creativity and relaxation.



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IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Tulare County Mental Health
Crisis Line: 1 (800) 320-1616

National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline: 1 (800) 273-8255 (online chat available)

Crisis Text Line:
Text GO to 741741

The Trevor Project (LGBT+)
1 (866) 488-7386

Tulare County Warm line:
1 (877) 306-2413 (non-emergency)

National Human Trafficking
Hotline: 1 (888) 373-7888
or Text HELP to 23373

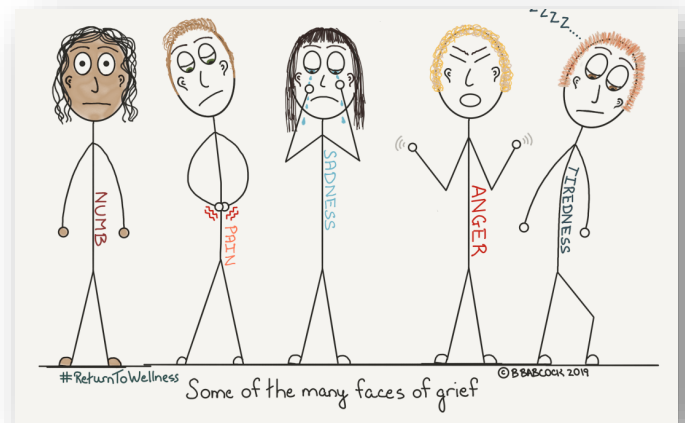
National Domestic Violence
Hotline: 1 (800) 799-7233
or Text START to 88788

Supporting Students Who Are Experiencing Grief & Loss

Did you know that **70%** of teachers have a grieving student in their classroom at any given moment? Grieving students often look to their teachers/school faculty for comfort and support. Here is some information to consider.

Most Common Grief Reactions

- Decrease or Increase in Appetite
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Decreased Ability to Concentrate
- Depression
- Socially Withdrawn
- Increased Anger/Irritability
- Lack of Motivation
- Avoidance
- Somatic Issues (i.e. stomach aches, headaches)



Tips for Teachers

- Acknowledge feelings.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Normalize expressing feelings.
- Keep in mind that some kids have trouble talking. Encourage them to express themselves in other ways—such as drawing or journaling.

Preschool	Elementary School	Middle and High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give opportunities to express thoughts and feelings through activities. • Answer questions using concrete descriptions and prepare for repeated questions. • Some reactions: Crying and/or screaming Clinging to caregivers Fear of separation Regressive behaviors Decreased speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to answer questions about what has happened. • Recognize “magical thinking”, as someone coming back to life, but do not validate them. • Have opportunities for expressing feelings. • Some reactions: “Acting-out” Lowered concentration Depression Agitation Withdrawal Headaches and stomach aches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not force students to share their feelings if they are not comfortable, but invite them to talk • Be aware of social media • They may use physical contact to show their support • Some reactions: Decreased school performance Anxiety Depression More high-risk behaviors Becoming emotionally numb Suicidal thoughts

For more information please visit:

- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/coping-grief-classroom/>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/tips-grief-at-school-2-chris-park>
- <https://www.etr.org/blog/my-take-grievingchildren/>

Reference:

NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee. (2015). *Addressing grief: Tips for teachers and Administrators*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Coping Skills Toolbox for Anxiety

As families continue to transition back to their typical day-to-day schedule, it's common for children to experience some anxiety. It's beneficial for children and adults to have a coping skills toolbox with various go-to examples they can utilize when anxiety starts to rise. The following coping skills will help regulate emotions and ease those anxiety symptoms, such as fast heart rate, worrying, anxiousness, overwhelming feelings of fear, and nervousness.

Try some of these skills:

- Listen to Music
- Deep breaths – 4 counts in, 4 counts out (using your hand; take a deep breath as you trace your finger going up and exhale as you trace down your finger: continue on all five fingers)
- Hug a loved one
- Spend time with your pet
- Help someone
- Get out in nature (grounding helps relax the nervous system)
- Journal (write your thoughts and feelings)
- Do a puzzle or word search
- Essential oil (lavender is calming)
- Silly putty (squeeze it, while taking deep breaths)
- Color or Draw
- Yoga



Teacher Tip: Write a positive note on your whiteboard that students can see and refer to throughout the day.

Kindly remind children that their feelings of anxiety are temporary. It's normal to feel nervous and scared. Remind them they are not alone and allow them space to share their feelings and emotions with you.

For more Coping Skill Ideas, Visit: [Coping Skills Toolbox Worksheet](#)

What is Social-Emotional Learning?



For more information on SEL, visit: [Overcomingobstacles.org](#), [Secondstep.org](#), [Casel.org](#), or [Thepathway2success.com](#)

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a critical component of education and healthy development in students. SEL can be used to assist children in identifying, managing, and comprehending their feelings and those of others. SEL teaches children how to use compassion and show empathy to themselves and others. SEL helps students establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and assists them in making decisions that are responsible and considerate of others.

SEL provides the opportunity for a quality and equitable education through genuine partnerships between schools, families, and their communities. These partnerships assist in establishing educational environments and experiences that include trusting and cooperative relationships, purposeful curriculum and teaching, and continuous assessment. SEL can assist with addressing numerous types of inequities. SEL assists in empowering both young persons and adults to collaboratively establish successful educational institutions and communities that are secure, healthy, and fair.

Need Ideas to Establish Good Study Habits?

Here are a few to consider.

1. **Set a time aside for studying-** Dedicate a time during the day to focus on learning. The key is to remain focused on learning for a specific time (i.e., 20, 30, 60 minutes). Set a timer, focus, and then give yourself a brain break.



2. **Create a study space and avoid distractions-** Find a place where you can spend time studying away from distractions. This space could be your bedroom, the kitchen table, outside under a shaded tree, or at a local coffee shop. It can be anywhere you feel comfortable. Avoid distractions by turning off anything that makes noise. For example, turn off the TV, radio, and put your phone on silent while you study.



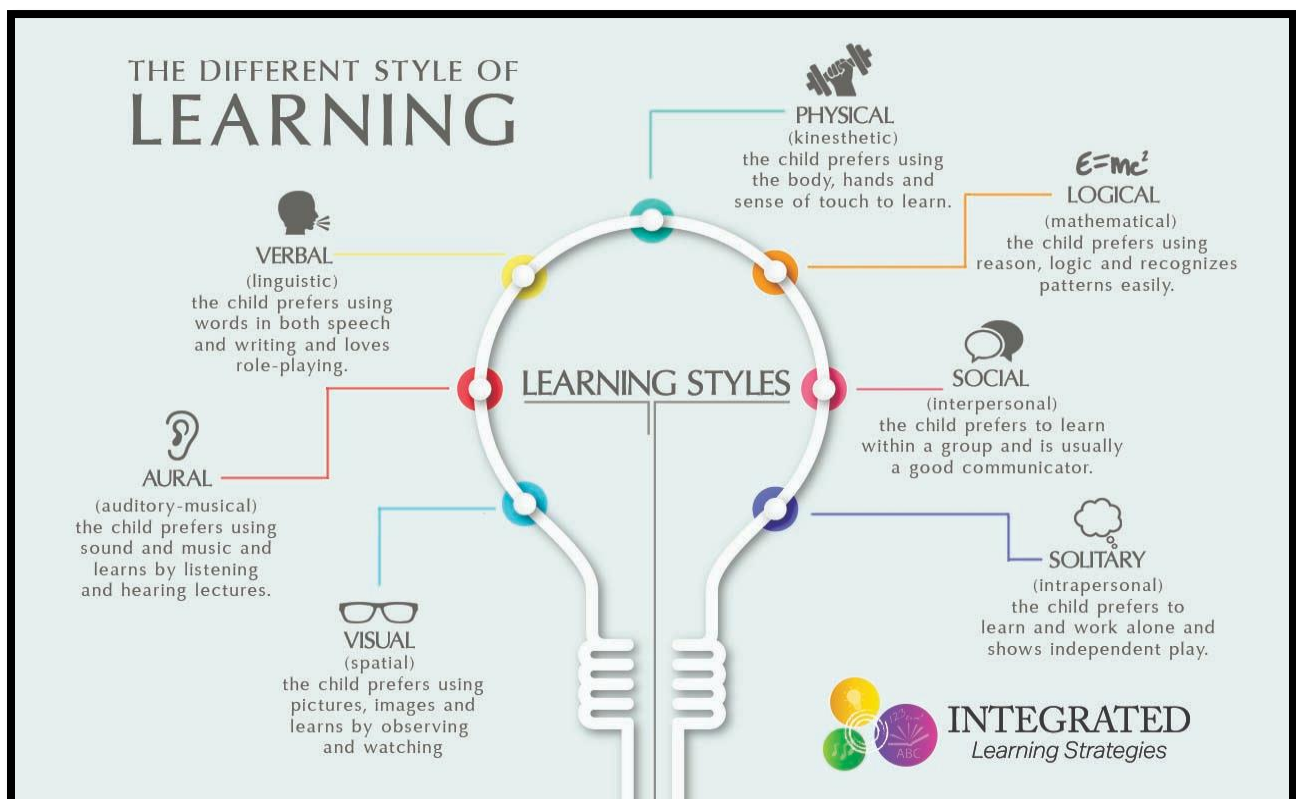
3. **Use a planner-** It is important to keep yourself organized. Using a planner or calendar will help you keep track of assignments or any upcoming tests. It will also help you stay on task and minimize procrastination.

4. **Take notes-** Taking notes during class will help you understand the assignments. By writing things down, it will help you remember what was said during class.



5. **Ask for Help-** It is very important to ask for help if you do not understand something. Ask a teacher, another student, or a parent for assistance. If you need a lot of help, ask the teacher if someone can tutor you. Everyone needs help at one time or another, so don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it!

6. **Be aware of your learning style-** Remember, everyone learns and processing information differently. Take a look at the image below to think about how you learn best.



Students, we are here for you!



These last two school years have been quite different; I think you'll agree. There has been a lot of change, and with change, some may notice a difference in how they think and feel—negativity, irritability, sadness, tiredness, moodiness, fear. These feelings are common and normal, but if you see that you feel this way often, you may be experiencing depression.



TEEN DEPRESSION IS...

Red Flags of Depression

- ☞ Sad or irritable mood
- ☞ Restlessness or agitation
- ☞ Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- ☞ Loss of energy
- ☞ Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- ☞ Loss of interest in favorite activities
- ☞ Change in eating habits
- ☞ Change in sleep
- ☞ Self-injury
- ☞ Thoughts of suicide

5 or more symptoms every day for **2** weeks or more

AN ILLNESS

Marked by a chemical imbalance that impacts moods, thoughts and behaviors.



COMMON

15-20% of teens will develop depression before adulthood.

SERIOUS

Depression is the **#1** risk factor for suicide.

TREATABLE

Treatment for depression can include talk therapy or a combination of talk therapy and medication.



Everyone Can Practice Good Mental Health



Eat three nutritious meals per day.



Get 2½ hours of exercise per week.



Get 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night.



Avoid harmful substances.



Do the things and surround yourself with the people that bring you happiness.

For More Information, Visit: [Teen Rehab - Mental Health Resources](#) | [Newport Academy](#)



Please get help if you are experiencing depression.

Vist: [Mental Health Services Visalia- Tulare County](#)

SLEEPING AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN

Our brain is continually growing and changing. Did you know that when you get a good night's sleep, you are allowing your brain to clean itself? The space around your brain cells increases while you sleep, flushing harmful toxins (germs) that build up when you're awake all day. For your brain to flush out those toxins, it must go through a complete sleep cycle-stages of non-rapid eye movement and rapid eye movement.

What is happening when I sleep?

Stages one and two are the light sleep stages (you wake up easier, eye movements slow down, breathing, and body temperatures decrease). The third stage is when you are in a deep sleep (harder to wake up and often the stage of sleep a person is in if they sleepwalk). The very last stage is when you see the most eye movement, and your heart may beat a little faster. This is when your dreams appear (see the image below). One sleep cycle usually lasts about 90 minutes. The more sleep cycles you have, the more rested and cleansing your brain had to prepare you for the next day!



Here are some tips you can do to ensure that you get a healthy good night's sleep.

1. **Stick to a sleep routine.** Try going to bed at the same time each night.
2. **Turn off your electronics** (i.e., cellphone use, watching television, playing video games, etc.) at least 30-60 minutes before going to bed to help your brain wind down.
3. **Watch what you eat.** Eating a heavy meal before you go to bed might cause you discomfort and make it difficult to fall asleep.

For more information on sleep hygiene, please visit the following websites:

- <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/not-tired.html>
- <https://www.brainandlife.org/articles/could-getting-more-high-quality-sleep-protect-the-brain/>