

**Sensory snacks (brain breaks) and mindfulness activities for secondary aged students who are learning at home**

When students learn from home, there is a tendency for them to sit in a hunched position for a long period of time. They spend many hours of the home-school day looking at a screen for learning, but when this time finishes, many will transfer their attention to another kind of screen rather than taking a break or some exercise.

All educational staff are aware of the negative impact of this sort of passive lifestyle on the social communication, fitness and mental wellbeing of our learners.

Interspersing your online teaching with sensory snacks (brain breaks) and mindfulness activities will increase focus and engagement as well as giving students with SEND opportunities to regulate on both an emotional and sensory level.

Below is a small number of age appropriate sensory / mindful activities that can be done during online teaching sessions.

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| **Name** | **Description** |
| **Stand and stretch** | Simply ask the students to stand up from their desks and stretch. First stretching their arms above their heads, then touching their toes. |
| **Pushes** | All push based exercises will give positive sensory feedback and allow for self-regulation. These include:   * Push ups (on toes, knees or against a wall dependent on ability) * Planking activities * Squeezing the hands into tight fists * Pushing the palms of the hands together * Sitting on the hands and pushing self up off the chair. * Steps ups * Squats |
| **Pulls** | All pull based exercises will give positive sensory feedback and allow for self-regulation. These include:   * Sitting on a seat and pulling on the legs * Gripping fingers together and pulling elbows outwards * Sitting on the floor with legs outstretched and pulling toes backwards |
| **Finger exercises** | Set students a finger exercise challenge such as:   * Placing hands face down on the desk and trying to lift the ring finger on each hand * Placing the hands together (prayer position) and lifting each finger in turn. * Placing the hands together (prayer position), then folding each finger down in turn. |
| **Rub down** | Using the flat of the palm, students rub firmly in small circles down each arm and down each thigh. |
| **Shoulder breathing** | Ask the students to take a deep breath in and as they do so, to raise their shoulders. Ask them to exhale and slowly lower the shoulders. |
| **Muscle isolations and relaxations** | Ask the student to concentrate their attention on the top of their head and to tense then relax the muscle there. Work slowly down and then back up the body, suggesting muscles for the students to tense and relax. |
| **Mindful listening** | Make sure all students are muted. Ask the students to step away from their computer and to close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them. Ask them to listen more and more deeply. |
| **Posture adjust** | Ask the students to become aware of their posture and the muscles it may be putting pressure on. Ask them to stretch each of these muscles and then adjust their seating position. |
| **Owl stretches** | Ask the student to turn their head to the right, then grip their left shoulder with their right hand, so their chin just touches their right shoulder. Inhale deeply, then as they exhale, rotate the head slowly across the chest to the left shoulder. Repeat for the other side. |