



Stretching and Breathing

Discussion

Discuss how getting out of our swirling thoughts can help us build awareness of our whole body. Explain that stretching and breathing is a simple exercise that can help students build awareness of their thoughts and how they affect their bodies. This activity works well as a 5-10 minute break in class, and may help students reduce stress and increase focus. An adult or student may lead this activity.

Stretching and Breathing

Our bodies constantly send us messages about how we're feeling. Is your heart beating quickly? Can you sense tension in your neck? Do you feel energized and want to jump up and down? The more we get in touch with our bodies, the more we can learn to build self-awareness and calm our minds.

- Stand strongly with your feet hip-width apart.
- Lift your right arm into the sky as high as you can. Notice how far you can reach your arm while your feet are still planted solidly on the ground. Keep your breathing steady. Is there a limit to how far you can reach? What is it?
- Lower your right arm and notice how it feels different from your left arm. What else do you notice?
- Keeping your breathing steady, lift both arms up as far as they can go, as though you're pulling a balloon down from the sky. Can you stretch a bit farther to grab the balloon? What do you notice in your body as you stretch? If you're holding your breath, your body is telling you to build awareness that you've gone as far as you can.
- While you keep noticing your breath, find a comfortable place to stretch your arms so it feels good but doesn't cause any strain. When you've reached the right stretch point, bring your arms down to your sides.
- Talk together about the different sensations you felt in your body. How did it feel to stretch too far? How did you feel when you found your comfort zone? (Snel, 2013)

