



Activity 8, Energy Modulation: The 4 B's of Self-Settling

Overview: Children learn a movement phrase to go with the words "brakes," "breathing," "brains," and "body" that can cue them to use self-settling techniques in various situations both inside and outside of the classroom. The technique is reinforced with an accompanying handout that can be posted where the children can see it easily and refer to it regularly.

Time needed: 15 - 30 min.

Ages: PreK - Adult

Space needed: Small

Props:

- The 4 B's handout and the 4 B's Challenge sheet
 - Parent Letter copied to send home with a copy of the 4 B's handout
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Purpose:

- Introduce self-talk
 - Learn a technique that incorporates movement to handle neurological arousal
 - Increase awareness of body cues that signal arousal; control volatility
 - Give children a ritualized method for calming down
 - Aid in stress management
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Important! Good for everyone. Older children may want to do this in a smaller, less conspicuous manner.

Discussion Topics:

- › Discuss the importance of self-talk in affecting mood and behavior.
- › Discuss the body cues that signal the need to calm down.

Activity Description:

- › Begin by reviewing Activity 7B "Putting on the Brakes, Part Two." Have the children move wildly in their own space and then put on the brakes. Ask the children to keep the brakes on (keeping a high level of tension in their bodies) for a minute or two and to remember how uncomfortable it feels. Then do abdominal breathing to release the tension.
- › Relate how sometimes people get too excited to calm down slowly, and they need to put on the brakes to stop themselves before breathing to relax.
- › Demonstrate clasping your hands in the following way: when the palms come together, the fingers of one hand point up toward the ceiling, and the fingers of the other hand point across the room. Then curl the fingers around the hands. The fingers do not inter-twine this way but one thumb overlaps the other.
- › When everyone can clasp their hands as explained above, show the children the first 'B,' BRAKES. For BRAKES, extend both arms straight in front of you and clasp your hands in the special grip to grab the impulse or the energy. When you grab the energy, you may even clap your hands together with a sound. Bring your hands in toward your body, near your chest. Elbows should be bent and pointing outward. Isometrically push one hand against the other as hard as you can (see handout for illustration). The special clasp keeps the fingers from getting pinched when using the isometric force. The heels of the hand receive the main push allowing the isometric push to be felt in the shoulders and chest. This exertion brings the energy inward, centering the person doing it.
- › The second 'B' is BREATHING. Stopping and breathing have already been incorporated into the last activity. Now you are formalizing them. For BREATHING, breathe in as you straighten your elbows, so your arms are in front of you, then release your hands and bring your arms up over your head. Breathe out, letting your shoulders relax. Do this twice.

- › Have the children practice brakes and breathing two or three times before continuing.
- › In preparation for the third 'B,' ask the children if they think a person's strength is determined by muscle size alone or if telling one's self that s/he is strong or weak will also have an effect.
- › Have one person stand up in the middle of the circle and show the class his/her biceps. Then have this person extend one arm and say, "I am weak, I am weak" over and over while you put your index and middle finger on the wrist of the extended arm and try to push it down.
- › Then have the same person extend their arm again, this time saying, "I am strong, I am strong" while you attempt to push their arm down again. It should be much harder to push it down. (Do not continue pushing for long because the person's elbow may start to hurt .)
- › Talk to the children about how powerful self-talk is. Relate this activity to excitability or anxiety. If you repeatedly tell yourself you are excited or worried, you will probably stay excited or worried. If you tell yourself it will be okay and you can calm down, you are more likely to calm down.
- › This leads to the third 'B', BRAINS. For BRAINS, take another deep breath while your hands are still up in the air. As you exhale, bring both hands with fingers intertwined to rest on top of your head to "wake up your brain." Feel the weight of your arms resting on your head and say to yourself, "I can calm down."
- › The fourth 'B' stands for BODY, as in feeling your body calm down. For BODY, take another deep, abdominal breath and stretch your arms up over your head again. As you exhale, bring both hands, one over the other, to rest on your chest near your heart. Feel your body get calm and quiet.
- › After teaching the children the 4 B's of Self-Settling, BRAKES, BREATHING, BRAIN, and BODY, have them repeat the words several times. Show them the pictures on the handout, demonstrating the movements that go along with each phrase.
- › Discuss body cues that may signal the need to use the 4 B's, such as face heating up, heart racing, hands clenching, head pounding, or ears roaring. Then discuss emotional signs that may indicate the need to use the 4 B's such as anger, upset, frustration, or over-excitement.
- › Practice the 4 B's several times.
- › Have the class move wildly in place or pretend it is recess time, and then do the 4 B's. They can run and play in the room for a short while until you tell them, "Okay, children, time to put on the brakes. Let's do the 4 B's." Do this two or three times.
- › Ask the class what a calm and quiet body looks like. You are trying to elicit things like: the body is not moving; the shoulders are down and relaxed; breathing is easy; or the face is not frowning or smiling, but rather it's loose. Tell them that is what will happen if they do the 4 B's correctly. Ask them what it feels like to be calm and quiet.
- › Challenge the class to practice the 4 B's outside prevention class. Pick two specific times during the day (such as after lunch and before reading) that you will have the class do the 4 B's. In addition, each day pick at least one other time that the class could use settling and do the 4 B's then as well. This way, the student will be practicing the 4 B's at least three times a day. Keep track of each time the group as a whole does it correctly and calms down. Do not eliminate a point if one student does not do it but everyone else does. Set three points a day as a goal and offer a reward (candy, extra recess, or extra time with the stretch cloth) if the class meets or exceeds the goal for two weeks. Sometimes, after they earn the first prize, they can work toward another two weeks where at least two times a day the children need to initiate doing the 4 B's on their own when the energy level in class, or individually, is rising.



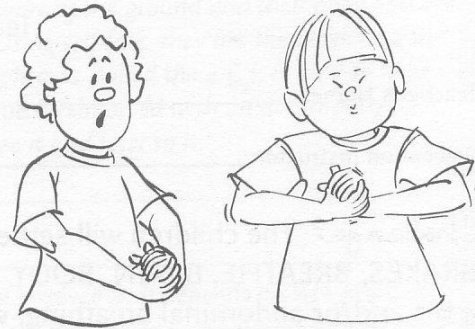
Note to Parents: Learning the 4 B's of Self-Settling is one of the main goals of this section. It is something that can be taught and used anywhere. The movements are not so conspicuous that they would stand out in public. Families could develop a code word to signal each other, including parents, that the 4 B's are needed. A chart keeping track of family use or individual use could be helpful in reinforcing the mastery of the technique.

THE 4 B's OF SELF-SETTLING



BRAKES

Catch the energy and squeeze it.



BREATHING

Bring the arms up and breathe deeply.



BRAIN

Rest your hands on your head and tell yourself, "I can calm down."

BODY

Put your hands on your heart and feel your body calm down.

