



Movement for mental health

fact sheet for schools

Why should children move more for mental health?

1. they will have less tension, stress and mental fatigue
2. they will feel more energised after a natural energy boost
3. they will feel a sense of achievement
4. they will gain more focus and motivation in all areas
5. they may feel less cross or frustrated
6. movement will build a healthy appetite
7. they will be having fun and boosting endorphins

How schools can encourage movement:

- implement 'The Daily Mile' from Nursery - Y6 and encourage the children to run, jog or walk a mile a day during the school day
- have mini movement breaks within the classroom behind their desks (calf raises, shoulder rolls, torso twists, knee lifts, bounce/jump)
- breathing exercises (four counts In, 8 counts Out, humming bee breath, mountain breathing)
- get outside and walk or run in nature, then pause breathe and ask them to mindfully notice what they can feel, see, smell, hear
- create a 'scavenger' hunt with clues that encourage running around your school grounds. You could link the hunt to a theme that is being taught in class, or to maths or science questions so that they are being challenged mentally and physically
- practise some basic yoga moves to help strengthen body and calm the mind
- go on a bug or tree hunt, giving specific things to find and work as a team to tick off the list the quickest
- make art in nature - create pieces of art made from the local environment encouraging movement, creativity and curiosity
- encourage children to play hopscotch and french skipping during breaktimes
- have the children follow fun instructions to create movement breaks in assembly or lesson time in order to reduce the risk of cognitive overload e.g everyone with a birthday in August jump up/sit down; anyone with a name beginning with G jump up/turn around/sit down
- play a game of duck, duck, goose in the school hall or playground
- create an outdoor learning environment and make your own version of a 'Forest School'. Include activities such as making a mini pond, a lego bird feeding table, or a bug hotel
- create a waterproof den and link this to the science theme of materials, allowing children to discover which materials make the best waterproof home for them
- draw a giant grid with chalk on the playground and play battleships linking the game to the maths theme of coordinates
- have a skipping competition, who can skip for 30 seconds/ who can do 100 skips?

- Create fun circuits for the children to follow including balancing, jumping, squatting, lifting and hanging

Available support

Mental Health Awareness Week May 2024

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk>

The Daily Mile

<https://thedailymile.co.uk/>

Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

<https://cypmhc.org.uk/>

PE with Joe

The Body Coach TV by Joe Wicks