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# Learning and Participation Resource Pack

Relaxation and Re-Focus

Suitable for individuals with  
Special Educational Needs.



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# Overview

Moments of relaxation and re-focusing the mind are important parts of our daily routine, especially for those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The simple exercises below, can be used at the end of activities, as transitions between activities, as a standalone session or as an aid for calming challenging behaviour.

## Lesson Ideas

### Starting points

- To begin make sure the environment is ready for some relaxation and re-focussing time.
- Ensure the group or individual has their own space and is comfortable.
- Think about things such as:
  1. Lighting – dim the lighting and use lamps, fairy lights or colour changing lights if possible. This creates a relaxing atmosphere and differentiates between the learning/play environment.
  2. Music – anything with a slow tempo - I recommend an instrumental track. If doing an activity involving focus on the body, choose one with a steady beat as you can work with the group/individual in time with music.
  3. Visuals – find a sensory video on YouTube – this can either be related to something from earlier in the session/day or a more general one with calming colours and patterns.

### Task ideas and developments

- Breathing focussed: Get the group/individual to focus on their breathing. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Take big breaths to slow down the breathing. It also gives them something specific to focus on. This can be done in time to music.

- **Body focussed:** Get the group/individual to focus on relaxing different parts of the body from head to toe. Choose a part of the body to focus on and you can describe how to relax it in a way they like, for example, turning all the lights off, getting it ready for bed etc.
- **Using fabric:** Using a piece of fabric, lift it high above the individuals head and then wash it over them. This is best accompanied with music and when doing this activity in groups put a calming visual on for them to have something to focus on whilst they wait for their turn.
- **Applying proprioception:** Using your hands or massage devices to apply deep pressure on the individual's body – this is generally done best as an activity for individuals as opposed to whole groups.
- **Relaxation Stimulation:** A game to re-focus the mind, getting group/individual to explore the five senses through pretending. Here are some examples:

#### **TOUCH**

- A hot stove
- Icicles
- Velvet

#### **TASTE**

- A sour lemon
- Their favourite candy
- Spinach

#### **HEAR**

- A gentle wind
- Underwater sounds
- A whistle

#### **SEE**

- A car coming far away and towards you
- A giant
- An ant
- A big black spider

#### **SMELL**

- Freshly baked bread
- A skunk
- Perfume
- Onions

## Appropriateness/Differentiation for lower/higher ability

- Breathing focussed: Appropriate for all. For higher ability groups/individuals it can be led with verbal direction of when to breathe in and out and if they are able, they can use the tempo of the music to regulate their breathing. For lower ability groups/individuals it is best to do this 1:1 so they can hear/feel/imitate your breathing.
- Body focussed: Appropriate for groups/individuals with a solid understanding of spoken language.
- Using fabric: Appropriate for all. Can be used for different purposes depending on the group/individual.
- Applying proprioception: Can be appropriate for all, it works very well for those with low functioning autism but depends on the preferences of the individual. If the individual is able, they can use their preferred communication method to ask for more/less and where they would like pressure to be applied.
- Relaxation Stimulation: Appropriate for higher ability groups/individuals with an understanding of spoken language and imagined concepts.

## Cool down ideas

- If your session is being accompanied by music let a song finish, try not to stop it halfway through, if you must do that, fade the song out.
- Start to fade out the activity as well – let them know how long is left in whatever time frame suits the individual verbally or using symbols, start to lessen the content of the activity, slowly restore the environment back to normal, say when relaxation time has finished.

# Outcome

At the end of one or several of the exercises, the group/individual should be calmer, focussed and ready to continue with whatever part of their day is next.

## Resources and useful links

**Resource 1:** Chill out playlist on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/11HXfRNi5ynyb08n1U23f8?si=u9-5EmKaRUeoPf9Wud8BPA>

**Resource 2:** Sensory and Neurocognitive Development (SAND) on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjsaN5CFAX5FjXw8Cwq2AmQ>

**Resource 3:** Hey Bear Sensory on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Slowboy71>

**Resource 4:** HDCOLORS on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/hdcolors>

**Resource 5:** Cat Trumpet on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/cattrumpetmusic/videos>

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If you require further information, contact

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