



Health & Wellness

Odyssey's Wise Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles Program

Dedicated to promoting, protecting and enhancing the health and learning potential of our students, families & staff.

Brain Gym Exercises; Developing Healthy Minds at School and at Home *continued*

Excerpts from: <http://www.braingym.org/faq>, Exercise list from <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/sascevanshandouts.pdf>

As a result of using Brain Gym® movements regularly in the classroom, **many teachers report significant improvements in the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling, and math** as well as in areas such as **concentration, attention, confidence, and creativity**. **Students report feeling energized and alert after consistently practicing Brain Gym movements.**

At Odyssey, our day begins with Brain Gym exercises during the morning announcements. Students are encouraged to take "Brain Gym Breaks" as often as possible and especially during periods of assessments.

Best practices in education and health support the positive impact of physical movement in helping children to reach their full academic potential.

Some Additional Brain Gym exercises to try:

Arm Activation - helps increase attention span.

- Reach up above your head with your left arm, lengthening from your rib cage. Hold your arm just below the elbow with your right hand.
- Now isometrically activate your left arm for a few seconds in each of four positions away from your head, forward, backward, and toward your ear. Rest your left arm again at your side. Now stand and let your arms hang comfortably by your sides.
- Repeat with right arm.

The Elephant activates all areas of the mind/body system; highly recommended for children with attention deficit disorder.

- Place the left ear on the left shoulder then extending the left arm like the trunk of an elephant with knees relaxed, draw the infinity sign (crossing up in the middle) in front of you. Switch arms after three to five complete signs.

Calf Pumps improve concentration, attention, comprehension, imagination and endurance.

- Standing arm's length away from a wall, place your hands (shoulder-width apart) against it.
- Extend your left leg straight out behind you so that the ball of your foot is on the floor and your heel is off the floor and your body is slanted at 45 degrees.

- Exhale, leaning forward against the wall while also bending your right heel and pressing your left heel against the floor. The more you bend the front knee, the more lengthening you will feel in the back of your left calf.
- Inhale and raise yourself back up while relaxing and raising the left heel.
- Do three or more times, completing a breath with each cycle. Alternate to the other leg and repeat.

Hook Ups improve mood, lessen anxiety.

- Stand or sit with the right leg crossed over the left at the ankles.
- Take your right wrist and cross it over the left wrist and link up the fingers so that the right wrist is on top.
- Bend the elbows out and gently turn the fingers in towards the body until they rest on the sternum (breast bone) in the center of the chest. Stay in this position
- Keep the ankles crossed and the wrists crossed and then breathe evenly in this position for a few minutes.

Energy Yawn relieves stress that interferes with learning and performance.

- Simply massage the muscles around the TMJ (temporal-mandibular joint) at the junction of the jaws.

Positive Points helps relieve stress and improve memory.

- Lightly touch the point above each eye halfway between the hairline and the eyebrow with fingertips of each hand. Close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply for a few seconds. Release & repeat 3 times.

Thinking Caps help with spelling, short-term memory, listening ability and abstract thinking.

- Using your thumb and index finger, gently pull and unroll the outer part of the ear, starting from the top and slowly moving to the lobe. Pull the lobe gently. Repeat three times.

Remember, to maximize effectiveness, drink water, before and after learning, especially before exams. Be consistent and patient; beneficial effects can be noticed after a few weeks or even after just a few days.