



Relax to Focus Movement Lessons©

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Relax to Focus is a teaching tool that guides us to calm the body so that we can focus on our work more fully. It gently and simply calls upon the kinesthetic intelligence helping to develop it. This is an asset for those who like to move a lot as well as for those who are reticent to move. It has seven stages with a lesson for each stage. It culminates in an integrated sequence that can be practiced in 3 – 10 minutes depending on how much time you want to spend on each section. The series is based on the neuro-developmental process of gaining motor control so it also stimulates different parts of the brain in a developmental progression.

The seven lessons summarized:

Breathing – for oxygenation, vitality and rest

Sensory Wake-up – reawakening the tactile sense, becoming more alert from the inside out

How big am I? Whole Body Coordination – uses each area of the body, explores bodily center and how it changes in different situations, establishes our body boundary in personal space and introduces the idea of shared space.

My Head Is Connected to My Spine: - we orient in the environment using the special senses of the head and by sending messages down the spinal cord. This lesson introduces different methods of sensory perception as well as integrating a connection between the head and the torso, the brain and the body.

Symmetry is Important for Focusing and Grounding – explore the pairs of body parts – eyes, ears, hands, feet. By finding symmetry with arms and legs we help to bring symmetry and coordination to all areas of the body. Focusing requires bringing the two eyes together. Three dimensional hearing and seeing requires that we use both of our ears and eyes in a coordinated fashion. This lesson also helps each person find her or his body midline, a place to return to when there is too much stimulation. Add to this the strength of the two arms or two legs working together and each person usually feels more grounded. Feeling both feet on the ground is important throughout other exploration.

Which side am I on? It is important to have a dominant side: Being right or left handed is important. Either is fine. Our bodies are designed to be able to act quickly with one eye, hand or foot leading the other partner in the pair. Becoming more aware of our right and left halves of our entire body supports the ability to switch sides when necessary. Many actions need one-sidedness but many others need to be integrated or alternated. These exercises help develop pathways to switch from one side of the cerebral cortex to the other.

Crossing the Midline – *choices, choices, choices* – this lesson helps us find the integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain through simple oppositional movement (as in walking, running and leaping). When we are able to reach with our right hand toward our left side we are coordinating quadrants of the body. Now we have more than two choices. This type of coordination also helps us to catch our balance if we are falling and may be useful in coming up with more solutions to problems.



Relax to Focus Movement Series© Standing Version

Breath: 3 breaths (deep into belly)

Sensory Wake-Up: Squeeze squeeze squeeze each arm and then give a quick rub-down to each of your legs Repeat 3x's

How big am I? Whole body coordination: Expand and shrink – grow as large as you can; create a tiny shape; breathe with these actions. As you extend into space keep space around you; know your body boundary.

My head is on top of my spine: accessing our inner snake /Torso and Head organization: Spinal wiggle – loosen up the joints of the spine by shaking and wriggling or slow spinal roll down – end with the head relaxed on knees, hanging down or eyes closed. Slowly roll up.

Symmetry is Strong: Upper Bilateral Symmetry & Lower Bilateral Symmetry: Symmetrical organizing – bring the body and focus to our midline and helps to ground us.

Put both hands on the floor and do mini- pushups; keep the weight equal in both arms; consciously push up with the legs to come to standing

Which Side Am I On? Right – left organizing:

Stand on one leg for 10 – 60 seconds – pick a focus point straight ahead. Repeat on other leg

Crossing the Midline: Cross-lateral coordination (opposition):

Crossing the midline – as if marching in place but have the elbow reach to the opposite knee; alternate rhythmically.

Relax to Focus Movement Series© Seated Version

3 breaths

Arms and thighs – quick invigorating squeezes

Expand and shrink with upper body

Head rolls down - rest on knees

Place hands on floor behind hips and lift hips up – keep weight even

Shift balance from right to left balancing on each side for as long as possible

Alternate between left knee and right elbow reaching together and right knee and left elbow reaching toward each other

Other Resources (books and videos):

Brain Gym – Educational Kinesiology; Smart Moves by Carla Hannaford

Brain Dance – Dance Explorations for Brain Development – Anne Green Gilbert; National Dance Association, AAHPERD