Rest & Return

Co-Regulation Strategies Tip Sheet

Rest & Return provides a structure for helping students rest and then return to participating in class when they need to take a break. Although the first part of the strategy—rest—is key to self-regulation, the second part—return—is equally important. Being able to regroup and then reengage is a valuable skill for navigating the world as an adult.

Adapt it to your setting. When deciding what space to use for resting, consider the following questions: Is there space in the classroom for a rest area? Will you allow students to take a break in the hall, or use another designated space outside the classroom? Or will you allow students to rest at their desk (for example, with their head down)?

If classroom space allows, use an empty corner or extra table as a rest area. Supply the area with items like a chair, pillows, fidget spinners, coloring books, or notepads. Use a silent timer or hourglass to track when students should return to class.

If space is limited, create opportunities for students to Rest & Return at their desks. Cue the strategy with a printed card labeled with "Rest" on one side and "Return" on the other or offer items students can take back to their desks, like notebooks for drawing or journaling.

Think it through. Think carefully about how you will explain and support students' use of this skill. Make a list of supplies you need, think about how you will provide positive reinforcement to use the strategy, and plan how you will check in with students who struggle with returning.

Get teacher buy-in. Obtain the classroom teacher's support for using this strategy by communicating the strategy's purpose and how you want students to use it. Checking with the teacher will help you understand the school's or specific classroom's permissions or space constraints.

Clearly explain expectations. Decide how to explain the strategy: its purpose, where to go, what's allowed, and how long the rest period will last. Emphasize that you expect students to reengage in class at the end of their rest period. After introducing it, remind students of the strategy in classes that cover triggering topics.

Practice what you preach. As with all the co-regulation skills, it's important to use the strategy yourself! Beyond supporting your own health and well-being by helping you reset during times of stress or difficult emotions, using this strategy helps you better explain to others how it works and what its benefits are.

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