Teaching Tips and Teaching Related Questions

I. Helping Students to Understand the SIP and PI Techniques

A. Your Brain is Like a Muscle

You can use the metaphor of the brain being like a muscle to explain the SIP's brain strengthening technique.

"When we want to build strong muscles, what do we do? We go to the gym, we exercise, we lift weights, etc. This is a brain-strengthening exercise. It strengthens our brain like building a muscle. Like strong muscles, strong brains make us smarter so it's easier to learn, and we get better grades."

B. The Value of Practice and Closing Our Eyes

You can use examples of common activities that require practice and focused attention to explain the value of doing the technique regularly with eyes closed. Examples: practicing guitar, sports, learning math or science, learning our ABC's.

"Why do we practice something? -- To help us get better at it. The more times we practice, the easier it becomes. We practice the SIP technique with our eyes closed so that we don't feel distracted by things going on around us.

If you are watching TV, trying to do your homework, and trying to learn how to play the guitar all at the same time, how well are you going to learn to play the guitar? – Maybe not so well because your attention will be scattered by trying to do too many things at once. When you focus and concentrate on your practice, you will learn faster and become a better guitar player."

C. Encouraging Participation

a. Students Who Don't Want to Close Their Eyes or Participate at All

It's OK if children do not want to close their eyes or wish to sit out completely from the exercise. Encourage them to sit respectfully so that other students can continue on.

"It's OK if you don't want to do the exercise, but please be quiet and listen so those who want to practice can stay focused."

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b. Students Can Create a Poster

You can invite the students to make a poster that shows how to complete the PI technique or write out the technique instructions to hang in the classroom. Younger students may need you to create the poster for them. This helps students to memorize the technique and reminds them to complete it each day.

c. Offer Incentives

Examples: if they close their eyes the whole time they get a sticker or they get to play longer. Pick an incentive that you feel confident they will be excited about, but keep it an appropriate exchange for their effort in completing the technique.

d. Encourage Students to Lead the Class in Practicing the Technique

After you feel confident that students are completing the technique properly, invite a different student to lead the technique each time the class practices. The student leader can get up in the front of the room and talk the students through the exercise. You can sit facing the student as a part of the "audience" and help them if they forget or need encouragement. If available, have the class SIP poster visible to use as a visual aid.

e. Gather Feedback after Practicing

Ask students how they feel after practicing the technique. Ask the ones who kept their eyes closed the whole time how they feel first. Write some of the responses on a board so that everyone can see what an impact the practice is having.
Common responses may include…Calm, Relaxed, Tired, Quiet, Happy, Different, Good, Sad, Angry, Ready to Learn, Focused, Clearer.

D. Responding to Unexpected Feedback

a. When Students Say they Feel Tired, Dizzy, Weird, Blurry, etc.

When you hear students say they feel tired, weird, blurry, etc., you can explain to them that when we exercise our muscles at a gym it's natural to sometimes feel tired or different from when we started. It's the same with this brain strengthening exercises.

If they say they feel dizzy, let them know we are doing something new and different for our brain. We don't usually breathe like this and concentrate so much. Recommend drinking some water. Let them know it will go away.

Sometimes students say they feel tired, but they actually mean relaxed. Be aware of language/age/vocabulary gaps as they might mean something else. It's okay to want to rest.

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b. Silly Student Feedback

Sometimes students start to play off each other and get silly depending on their age. For example: "I feel like a dinosaur." "I feel like a dinosaur, too!" "I feel angry." "I feel angry too!"
In these cases, you can diffuse the commentary by letting the students know it might feel different every time they practice and that we don't all have to feel the same.

Practicing the brain exercises brings some students into a quiet personal place where they get in touch with their feelings. Always be encouraging no matter how outrageous or strange their response may be that there is no right or wrong way to feel. Over time, there will be a variety of effects and they are not always easy to describe in words.

E. Teaching Related Questions

a. How many times a day should I practice the PI technique?

We recommend practicing the technique at least once a day and encouraging students to practice twice a day. Once at the start of the day and once after lunch or afternoon recess is ideal.

b. What benefits will the students gain from using the SIP?

With regular practice, students can feel calmer, more focused, more relaxed, more confident, and more aware. In time, they can develop better coping skills, more confidence, and experience increased cooperation with students, teachers and other members of the community. Students often report an increased ability to retain information and to handle stress.

c. When will I first start to notice results in the children from the use of these practices?

Some students and teachers notice the benefits immediately. Many students report feeling calm, energized, ready to learn and having clearer vision after the first time practicing. Sometimes students report feeling tired or different. This response is natural. As with any new exercise, there is often a learning curve and some adapting is necessary before students feel acclimated. Experience has proven that it can sometimes takes 2 weeks of regular practice (one time each day) to see results.

d. Are these techniques just for students?

No. The PI techniques can be used by anyone. Anyone who practices the PI techniques can receive its benefits without prejudice.

e. Does every student have to participate?

We encourage all students to participate and we recommend that if a student does not want to participate that he or she remains quiet and respects the other students wanting to practice.

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f. I do not understand the purpose of the hand movements. Can you explain them?

We gently place our hands over the eyes and parts of the head and brain to indicate where the sound should be felt and focused. For example, "Put your right hand over your right eye and say the sounds."

The warmth and presence of the hand on each part helps draw the students' awareness to where we are putting the sound. The tactile use of the hands is very helpful for new students and younger students to remain focused. If you have a student with limited mobility or a learning disability that makes hand movements too difficult, it is still effective for the student to vocalize the sounds but omit the hand movements. Focus on the parts of the technique that the student can complete and gradually work in the remaining elements if/when they become ready to do so.

We can also practice the sound exercises by imagining or visualizing the sound/vibration going into that part of our brain without the hand movements.

We would love to hear your feedback about the SIP and the PI Technique!
If you have any questions or feedback, please contact support@phonemicintelligence.org

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