Breathing and Stretching.

Tags: listening, movement, relaxation, warm-up

Type: Whole class

Time: 5 minutes

## **Why are we doing this?**

Breathing and stretching help us regulate our nervous systems. Taking a few deep breaths can help reduce anxiety and stretching and shaking out body parts help us shake off any lingering tiredness or nervousness.

## **What materials/set-up do I need to prepare?**

You only need enough space for the students to stretch out their hands and shake out their legs. A nice calming playlist is also helpful.

## **How do we do this?**

Begin with a few deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose for four second, hold the breath in for 7 seconds, before exhaling for 8 second. Try exhaling like you are breathing through a straw or as if you were breathing on a candle flame without the flame going out.

After a few deep breaths move on to the body. Start by focusing on keeping the hands relaxed for sixty seconds. Most people will get the urge to shake out or clench their hans and that is perfectly ok. Keep breathing deeply and regularly throughout the exercise.

Move the focus through the body. Focus first on the toes, stretching them out as far as you can and then make them as small as possible. Roll the ankles around a few times. Move up the body, rolling out joints and stretching out limbs as far að they can go. Don’t forget to roll the neck as it loosens a lot of tension.

To get people ready to move on to the next activity have them shake their body parts. First one leg at a time, then the arms and, finally, the head. Shake the entire body to get the blood flowing and then everyone should be alert and focused to move on to the next exercise.

## **Alternative methods:**

Prepare a playlist and breathe and stretch in rhythm. You can even start with a relaxing song and then take a dance break at the end to pump the energy back up.