



Suggestions for Resetting Attention Span

The teacher *must* always be present when you are reading to the children, but sometimes s/he may not be paying enough attention when disruptions occur. Or there may be times when you need to wake up your listeners a bit: these are growing kids, and they can get sleepy. Maybe they just came in from recess, are full of energy, and now they have to sit still. All can be challenging situations.

Children who struggle with attention often do better if they are given brief breaks for active play/ physical movement.

Wake Them Up (if zoning out or easily distracted--think “theater games”)

- **Crazy 8s:** Ask the children to stand up. Start with one arm up and shake it out while counting backward from 8, same with the opposite arm and then each leg. Keep going down from 8 until you reach 1 and end in a frozen position.
- **Stretch:** If they just need a little waking up when you arrive or between books, have them stand up and stretch their arms to the sky while on their tip toes then reach down to the floor. Maybe swing softly side to side (be mindful they don’t bump into one another).



Calm Them Down (Think “meditation/yoga.”)

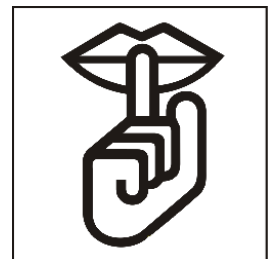
- Breathing exercises. They can pretend to be snakes hissing out slowly.
- Do an activity in slow motion all together. Maybe have partners and be mirrors.
- Have them sit on the floor with their eyes closed as you take them on a short journey down a lazy river describing the how the sun feels, how the air smells, how relaxing it is floating on an inner tube....

Play Memory Games - these help children focus in a fun way.

- Simple memory games such as I-Spy or Simon Says improve children’s concentration. Use I-Spy to find something specific in an illustration.
- Give children something to listen for—tell them to raise their hand when they hear or see something in the book that repeats. Be specific.

Focus-In Call-Outs (Ask the teacher or parent if there’s something specific they already use that helps reset attention.)

- “1-2-3, all eyes on me.” The children respond with “1-2 eyes on you.”
- “If you can hear me, clap once.” In a soft voice, you can add, “If you can hear me, *do this...*” (i.e. hand on head, etc.)
- Do a clapping pattern they can repeat back.



Now you have a few tools in your toolbox when distractions occur. If children continue to struggle with attention, please reach out to the teacher for help.