

Mountain or Neutral Pose and Focus

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Appropriate Grades: 1-5+

Objectives:

- Students will practice control of gross motor skills.
- Students will maintain focus.

Materials:

- Open space large enough for the whole group—preferably indoors.

Procedure:

- Explain to students they will practice physical control and focus.
- Arrange students in a circle.
- Discuss what comes to mind when they think of a mountain—“strong”, “powerful”, “rocks”, “trees”.
- Explain that each student will be standing as strong or powerful as a mountain.

Mountain or Neutral Pose

- Stand with feet on the floor, hip-width apart—this creates a solid platform.
- Toes and heels equally taking the weight of the body—don't lean forward on your toes, or back on your heels and don't lock the knees. Try to keep them loose.
- Straight spine, head comfortably on the top of the spine.
- Roll shoulders forward and then up to the ears and then back. Feel the back ribs settle. Arms and hands held loosely at the sides, shoulders relaxed.
- Gaze should be straight ahead, not up or down or to the side.

- Add breathing:

Breathing—purposeful breathing assists with focus.

- NOTE: Belly breathing—extend the belly on the inhalation—this drops the diaphragm and allows the lungs more room for expansion. Collapse the belly—pull your belly button toward your spine—on the exhalation.
- While in Mountain/Neutral Pose, students lace their fingers together and hold their hands in front of their chest. While breathing in through the nose, bring arms up over head.
- On the exhalation, bend the arms and bring the palms of the hands to the top of the head.
- On the next inhalation, straighten the arms above the head.
- On the next exhalation, bring hands back to the position in front of the chest.
- Repeat the first inhalation and exhalation (hands above the head and then palms on the top of the head).
- On the next inhalation, bring the arms up above the head.
- On the next exhalation, bring the hands down the front of the body, bend at the waist and place palms on the floor (or toward the floor).
- Inhale back to the original starting point, hands in front of the chest. Exhale.
- Repeat this sequence a few times.

- Add focus:

Focus

- Ask students to look across the circle and pick a point in the room that doesn't move—it could be an image on the bulletin board, a light switch, anything that won't move.
- Tell them they need to focus on that point. They can blink (actually encourage this!), they can breathe, but they cannot look away. With younger students, go around the circle and ask them to tell you the item/object/point they are focused on.
- Once you feel everyone is focused, go around the inside of the circle and look in the faces of each student. Do not touch, just look briefly at them and move on. The idea is to see if they can maintain focus without smiling or giving you eye contact.
- One at a time, have two or three students go around the circle and look into the faces of the others, just as you did. No touching or trying to distract—just look.

This breathing exercise can be done while seated. Students sit at the edge of their chairs, roll their shoulders back (just like in Mountain Pose), and make sure both feet are flat on the floor.

