

Brain Boosters

What: incorporating brain break reviews (“brain boosters”) in the classroom.

When: every 20 minutes of instruction time.

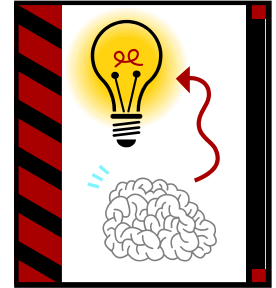
Length: each brain booster should last no longer than 1-2 minutes.

Why: because brain boosters are logical, physical, emotional and supported by research to promote maximum learning in the following ways:

A: attention grabber

I: increases energy and engagement

M: memory retention



Brain Booster Options:

1. **Share It:** Invite participants to stand and turn to a partner. Share one thing that you have learned in the past 20 minutes.

Variation: Find a partner from across the room to share with, not from your table.

Did you know that just standing alone increases oxygen to the brain by 5-8%?!

2. **Draw It:** Invite participants to stand. Instruct participants to use one hand to draw (with invisible ink on the ceiling) a concept that they have just learned.

Did you know that in terms of retention, images are better than words for remembering concepts?

3. **Make It Stick:** Invite participants to write a new learning (“something you just learned about the signs of maltreatment”) on a sticky note and adhere it to the appropriate piece of large paper posted on the wall.

Prep: Hang several large sheets paper around the room with various labels depending on your topic (ex. Facts of Maltreatment, Signs of Maltreatment, Definitions of Maltreatment, Impact of Maltreatment). Also have a generous supply of sticky notes on the tables.

4. **Mark-Ups:** Have a supply of highlighters, colored markers, sticker dots or post-it notes/flags on the tables. Instruct participants to use one of the following mark-up suggestions:
- Highlight the main idea on this worksheet
 - Circle the three most important facts on this page
 - Write a one page summary on a post-it note and stick it to this page
 - Flag the most important concept on this worksheet
 - Put stickers or dots beside 3 ideas you can use in the office
 - Draw a symbol or picture of the most important fact on the page

5. **Cocktail Napkin:** Invite participants to stand. Pair up with a partner, and each grab a sticky note pad and pen. For the other person, draw and explain one concept you have recently learned (similar to what someone might do in a bar if the cocktail napkin is the only paper available).

Did you know that talking trumps listening for boosting memory?

6. **Fact or Fiction:** Read a series of 2-3 true/false questions from material covered in the past 20 minutes. You have 3 options for executing this brain booster based on level of participants' comfort with sharing information:
- a. While standing, if the answer is true, put your thumb up in front of your chest; if the answer is false, put your thumb down in front of your chest (safest method).
 - b. Stand up if you believe the statement to be true; remain seated if you believe the statement to be false.
 - c. Hold up a green card if the statement is true and hold up a red card for a false statement.
 - d. Walk to one side of the room if you agree with the statement; walk to the other side if you disagree with the statement (least safe method).

Prep for Method C: Have enough green and red cards for all participants at the tables. They can be any size, but should at least be 3x5 or larger.

Prep for Method D: Put a laminated card for "Agree" on one side of the room and a laminated card for "Disagree" on the opposite wall.

Did you know that movement is better than sitting for making the training stick?

7. **Walk and Talk:** Also called "Walkabout," this activity requires that the participants pair up and walk around the training room, around the training facility or outside for 2-3 minutes. Instruct them to discuss a concept they have learned in the past hour and how they might apply what they have learned to the work-setting.

Variation-GLP Walk: Pair up with someone from across the room and leave the room to do this activity, which takes 10 minutes. This might be more appropriate for an end-of-the-week morning review. Instruct pairs to discuss the following three topics:

G: one thing in which I am **grateful** (sets a positive mood)

L: one thing I have **learned** (reviews important concept)

P: one thing I **promise** to do in the office (applies learning)

8. **Graffiti Time:** Also called “Wall Writing,” this structured activity is when you direct learners to write specific responses on labeled charts around the wall at designated times. Here is a list of suggestions:

- A question I still have about...
- What I want to learn...
- My opinion about this is...
- One fact I want to remember is...
- The most important thing I have learned so far is...
- I can share this information with...
- How I plan to use what I have learned is...

Variation: Each group has a chart that they complete as the training progresses. Take a picture of the chart and email it to the group as a souvenir of the training.

9. **Beat the Clock:** Instruct each group to stand up and move around a flipchart/stand. Give them 1 minute to brainstorm as many statements about the assigned topic during that minute, while recorder writes them down on the flipchart paper. Have a timer available for this exercise. You may want to celebrate completion of this brain booster with a group cheer to get some energy flowing.
10. **Who Has the Ball?** Have participants stand. Using the stress ball at the table, one person holds the ball at a time and shares one thing learned in the past 20 minutes. The person holding the ball decides who speaks next with a toss to another person.

Prep: Have a stress ball on each table and remove all open drinks before this exercise.

11. **Each Teach:** Instruct participants to stand and find two other people to form a triad (or group of four if necessary). Each person gets 30 seconds to teach the others a concept recently learned in class. Rotate around so that all may share. Then participants may return to their seats.

Just remember, if you want to make the training stick:

- *movement* trumps sitting;
- *talking* trumps listening;
- *images* trump words;
- *writing* trumps reading;
- *shorter* trumps longer; and
- *different* trumps same.

Resources: *Using Brain Science to Make Training Stick* by Sharon Bowman (2011) and Eric Jensen’s workshop “Teaching with the Brain in Mind” (2009).