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iMOtion - Framing Informal Moments (IM) in Trainings

Promoting body well-being during IM in online trainings

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Informed by the recent studies on cognition, in this article we highlight the importance of the body in the learning process and suggest some activities that can be offered during informal moments in training.

From recent studies on cognition we came to know that the mind is no longer conceived as a set of logical/abstract functions, but as a biological system rooted in bodily experience and interconnected with bodily action and interaction with other individuals. This theory, defined as “embodiment”, originates from the framework of the embodied cognition which is an approach that states that mind and body are not separate and distinct¹, but both are part of the body which contributes to determining our mental processes and cognition. The theory supports the idea that the human mind is fundamentally shaped by having a human body and using that body to interact with the world². The embodied theory states that thought cannot and should not be separated from feeling and doing and that reason should not be separated from emotion, as this would result in an incomplete learning process. Therefore when running a training course, as a trainer you should always take into account that movement not only release stress but also supports the cognitive functions.

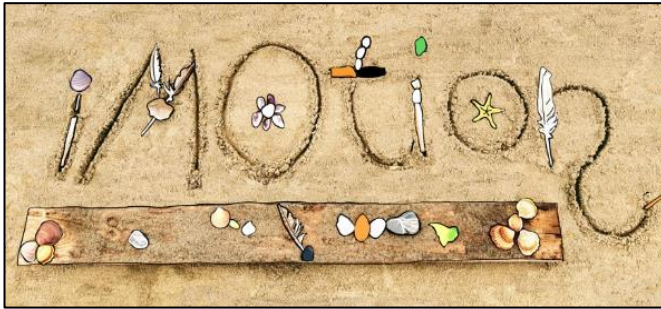
Research shows that being sedentary in class directly impacts mental and cognitive functions as well as students’ experiences, academic performance and behaviours. After 15 to 20 minutes of sitting attention is lost and 90% of the oxygen in the brain

¹ Damasio, A. R. (2005). *Descartes’ error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. New York: Penguin. (Original work published 1994)

² Gibbs, R. (2005). *Embodiment and cognitive science*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press



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and body becomes stale, reducing the amount of glucose available to the brain. Thus learners become tired or seemingly lazy, agitated, unable to retain information and disengaged. Active movement, especially during distance learning, should involve the whole body, balance, and cross-lateral movement activities to awaken the brain to learn and help to anchor what is learned. This movement will get the different regions in the brain “talking” with each other so that information may be stored within the brain’s network. For example, Peiris et al.³ (2021) observed that movement breaks improved engagement and productivity in the classroom among university students. Nair and Segal (2022) suggest that doing chair yoga together can reduce stress and increase concentration in the online classroom, and Segal⁴ (2022) has received positive feedback from her online graduate students about using short mindfulness activities in her classes. When allowing online informal moments you are aiming at

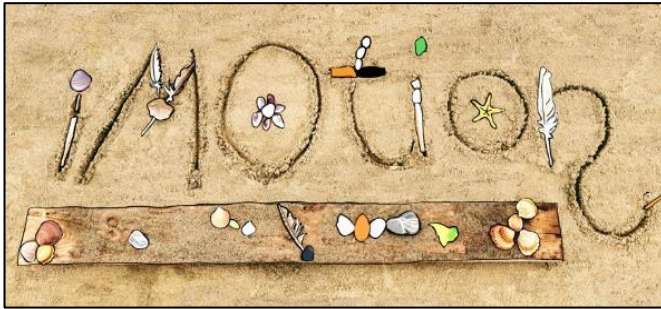
- Providing spaces for community bonding and encouraging student interactions;
- Preparing participants to be more attentive, focused, and engaged for the rest of the session;
- Allowing students to prepare for activities in the remainder of the session (skimming or refreshing themselves on the material);
- Giving students and the trainer scheduled time for bathroom breaks, coffee/tea/water refills, or caregiving check-ins without having to miss class content;

³ Peiris, C.L., O’Donoghue, G., Rippon, L., Meyers, D., Hahne, A., De Noronha, M., Lynch, J., & Hanson, L.C. (2021). *Classroom Movement Breaks Reduce Sedentary Behavior and Increase Concentration, Alertness and Enjoyment during University Classes: A Mixed-Methods Feasibility Study*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(11), 5589. <https://edtechbooks.org/-dmxR>

⁴ Segal, K. (2022). *Mindful learning in the Adobe Connect classroom*. In M. Marquart, L.W. Marshall, R. Chung, & K. Garay (Eds.), *Designing Engaging and Interactive Synchronous Online Class Sessions: Using Adobe Connect to Maximize its Pedagogical Value*. EdTech Books. <https://edtechbooks.org/-ttbf>



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- Giving everyone a chance to stretch or relax, to relieve any body pain associated with being in front of a computer;
- Providing time for the trainer to adjust the lesson plan if modifications are needed
- Allowing trainer to follow up on questions or chat comments they may have missed.

Here are some activities that you can suggest for activating participants at a body level:

1 Looking with fresh eyes

Participants take a walk, either in their garden or just around their home, and come up with three new things they have 'noticed'. They may need to do a few laps of the space and this might become harder as time goes on, but the idea is to focus and pay attention, rather than just spot an item they haven't set eyes on before!

2 Go outside for a selfie

Have participants take a break from the computer by going outside to take a selfie. Changing the scenery allows students to rest the mind and get some fresh air. Students can share their pictures on Pdlet or in a discussion forum, promoting opportunities to create a community of learners.

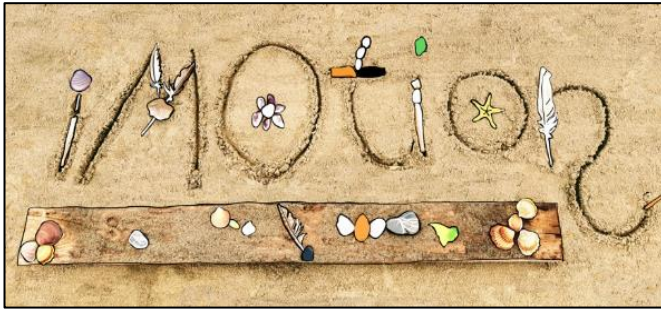
3 Dance it out

Take a minute or two to get up and just dance by moving your legs, head and arms. Sing along with the video and give participants the chance to see the personal side of you instead of just a trainer on a screen. You can invite students to participate by sending you a video clip to play.

4. Have a body percussion mini session



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Play music with body percussion is fun and activates the body at the same time. Put on a video tutorial and invite participants to take action either on their own or together in front of the screen. After a ten minute rehearsal they can try it once more without the help of the video tutorial. Here are a couple of suggested ones:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsXOehynKJ8>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9GPb02BV_w

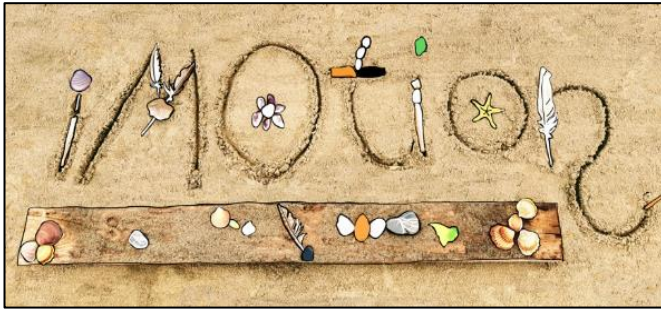
5 Body tapping

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), also known as “tapping”, was first introduced in the 1990s by Gary Craig, a Stanford graduate and certified master practitioner of neurolinguistic programming. Body tapping is a form of self massage that uses pressure instead of needles to stimulate the body's meridian points. When these points are stimulated, it can help improve overall health and wellbeing. By stimulating meridian points - a foundation of traditional Chinese medicine - body tapping can help improve energy levels, sleep, stress and anxiety levels, and immunity. Body tapping can be used to help alleviate emotional pain, physical pain, balance energy flow and restore balance to the energy system and also to relieve stress. Tapping works by sending signals to the parts of the brain (mainly the amygdala and hippocampus) that control stress to release it and relax. When the brain and body have reduced the perceived stress individuals can better access and process other emotions and use their frontal cortex to engage in rational thought. There are a number of different points that you can tap on, but some of the most common ones include:

- The karate chop point - located on the outside of the hand - this is good for when one is feeling stressed or anxious
- The eyebrow point - located at the beginning of the eyebrows - this point can be good for tapping when one is feeling angry or frustrated
- The side of the eye point - this is located on the bone next to the eye - this point can be good for tapping when one is feeling overwhelmed or sad



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- The under the eye point - this is located on the bone below the eye - this point can be good for tapping when one is feeling tired or sleepy
- The under the nose point - obviously, this is located just below the nose - this point can be good for tapping when one is feeling anxious or stressed.
- The chin point - located just below the bottom lip - tapping this point can assist when one is feeling angry or frustrated.
- The collarbone point - this is located at the beginning of the collarbone - tapping along this point can help when one is feeling anxious or stressed.
- The underarm point - this is located on the inside of the upper arm about 10 cm below the armpit - this point can be good for when one is feeling tired or sleepy.

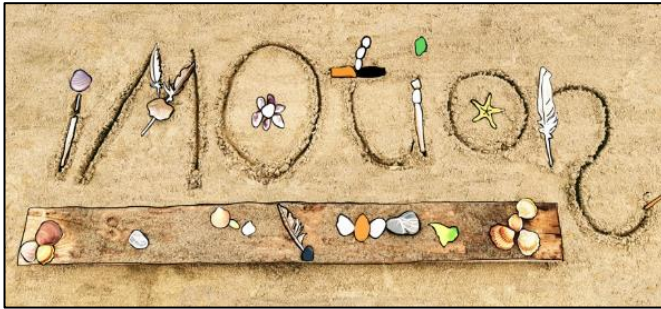
These are just some of the most common points that you can tap on. There are many other points that can be explored. When you are finished tapping, it is important to take a few deep breaths and relax. Here is a video tutorial that shows you how body tapping can be done: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1398sgxSe0I>

6 Activating the senses

5-4-3-2-1 is another great brain break activity that is simple to do and can be changed in a variety of ways to fit your particular audience. Ask individuals to gently close their eyes for a few seconds and then take turns sharing aloud 5 things that they hear (lights humming, cars outside, the radio, their clock ticking, and their cat meowing in the other room), 4 things they see (computer screen, sun outside their window, letters to open on their desk, a bottle of water), 3 things they feel (warm sweater they are wearing, stomach growling, and breeze from a fan nearby), 2 things they smell (their own perfume, lemon scented candle) and 1 thing they taste (coffee or other beverages). The side benefit from this activity is that it's also a de-stressor, as your brain can't stay in high anxiety mode and also pay attention to this activity.



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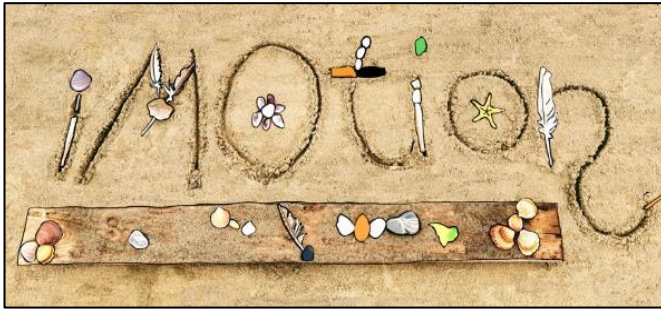
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These were just some ideas, but we're sure your creative mind can think of many more. As research continues to explore how exercise facilitates the brain's readiness and ability to learn and retain information, we recommend you promote activities to use with participants during informal moments in trainings to boost their as well as your body and brain health.



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