

Changing Mood

Changing the accustomed mood of the classroom will inspire changes in learning states. Varying normal classroom customs such as rules, goals, and schedules sets a different tone that can inspire students to respond with awakened receptivity.

Focusing

Mental and emotional states respond immediately to intentional focusing or meditation. This can be done quite easily in the classroom by leading students in deep breathing exercises (slowly inhaling and exhaling), guiding them in visualization exercises, or initiating a toning session (everyone hums or sings certain harmonious musical notes).

Involving Students

Learners who have some control over their own learning activities and environments readily achieve states appropriate for learning. Involving students in creating curriculum or decorating the classroom gives them a sense of control, as does providing frequent and timely feedback on their work, ideas, and behavior. Teachers who address different learning modalities and provide opportunities for social bonding within the classroom are keeping their students stimulated and emotionally attuned and ready to learn.

These are a few strategies for changing learners' behavior by first changing their states. Success depends heavily upon timing and careful observation. It can sometimes happen that a student needs to remain for a time in an unreceptive state, and an inappropriate interruption would only cause more trouble than it was intended to correct. It may be necessary to allow a student who is grieving about something, for example, to remain quiet and aloof from the rest of the class for awhile as the child works through the emotion. Acknowledging the need for time out may ultimately enable the teacher to gather the student back into the classroom flow with comparative ease.

Useful Tip: Teachers who are consciously aware of the states of their learners can use a great variety of strategies to change their behaviors. A deep breathing exercise, for example, can quickly get students focused and ready to concentrate. After a period of intense concentration, on the other hand, a few jumping jacks refresh both the brain and the body. A student who is sitting at the back of the classroom almost falling asleep may be transformed into another state of mind if allowed to get up and stretch. The time to ask for a change in behavior is when the student's state has been transformed into one amenable to learning.

To summarize, brain-based learning begins when a learner is in a state conducive to learning. Teachers who can successfully influence their learners' states will have no trouble commanding attention and motivating their students. Ultimately, the goal is to be able to teach and motivate learners to manage their own states.