

A P R I L 2 0 1 8

# Psych Up Ashford!

Brought to you by your School Psychologist:  
Emily Deliberto

## Spring is Coming! (finally!)

- **Using the Outdoors:** Alas, warmer weather is here. With it, means more opportunities for fresh air and Vitamin D for our students and ourselves. Take your students on a Mindfulness Nature Walk. Challenge your students to go outside and use their eyes to notice 3-5 things they may have never noticed before. Next, identify 3-5 sounds they didn't notice before (such as a bird chirping, wind blowing, etc.). Take it further, with having them identify things they can feel (such as wind on the face, cold air/warm air, sun on the skin). Do they notice any smells? Mindfulness walks provide the brain a break from learning as well as supporting students to focus their brains on the present moment rather than any stressors or worries. *This is a great practice for students right before or after testing!*

- **Spring-Themed Brain Breaks:** Liven up your classroom brain breaks by adding in Spring themes. Blossoming like a flower, falling like a rain drop, hopping like a bunny or a frog, hatching like a chick, waving like trees/grass in the wind, floating like a cloud in the sky, etc.



## Tackling the Fidget “Craze” in Your Classroom in a Productive Way

This month's newsletter is focused on Fidget Tools. While fidgets have been used as supportive sensory tools for many years, they have recently become more “trendy” with the creation of fidget cubes and fidget spinners. While fidgets can play a beneficial role, they can easily become a toy to many students. Not all students may demonstrate benefits from the use of different types of fidgets. Some may do better with fidget breaks rather than using fidgets during a lesson. This newsletter will discuss some rules to help students determine when a fidget is a TOOL or a TOY, ways to offer fidget use in the classroom, and ways to provide cheap, DIY fidgets for the classroom.

## Save The Date!

### Autism Awareness Month April

Find ways to Light It Up Blue in honor of your students with ASD past, present or future. Learn ways to get involved here:  
<http://www.autism-society.org/get-involved/national-autism-awareness-month/>

### Screen Free Week April 30<sup>th</sup> - May 6<sup>th</sup>

This week is focused unplugging and supporting kiddos in finding entertainment though creating, exploring, reading, and connecting. More info:  
<http://www.screenfree.org/>

### Stress Awareness Month: April






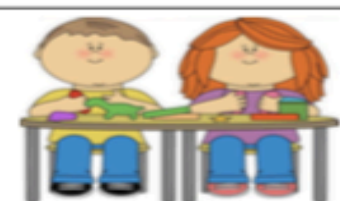






Remember the importance of managing your own stress in order to be the best support for your students. Care of self lends itself to positive impacts on students. Make sure to find ways to de-stress!

# Establishing Fidget Rules

In order for students to use fidgets correctly, *it is essential for them to be taught how to use them appropriately.* You can teach fidget use through interactive modeling during a morning meeting. Students often enjoy demonstrating examples and non-examples of expected use of fidgets.

Using the language ***“Is it a TOOL or a TOY?”*** is a helpful way for students to understand how fidgets can help them and distract them. By establishing fidget rules, you are also helping students with an important executive functioning skill, ***SELF MONITORING*** (which ties into the *Reflection and Critique & Revision* elements of *Project Based Learning!*)

Below is one example of “Fidget Rules: Tool vs. Toy.” A full size version is available on Google Drive or feel free to take inspiration to make your own with your students!

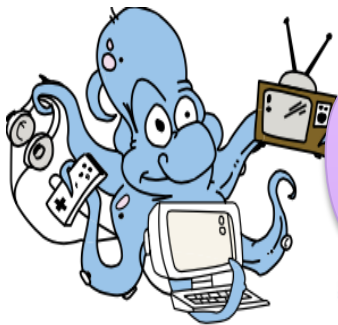
Fidget Rules	
How to use fidgets the right way to help you pay attention.	
TOOL 	TOY 
Eyes on teacher or learning materials 	Eyes on Fidget 
Under table, in your lap, or in your pocket 	On your desk or table 
Use 1 hand 	Uses 2 hands 
Other's don't notice 	Distracting others 
Squeezing play dough or putty 	Making something with playdough or putty 

# Fidgety Unthinkables

## April's Featured Unthinkables

April focuses on the Unthinkables that can get in student's brains to make them feel distracted, overly energetic, impulsive or fidgety. There are two refreshers on previously described common Unthinkables (Brain Eater & Worry Wall) that often benefit from fidget use. A new Core Unthinkable, Energy Hare-y is also introduced as well as some of the lesser-known supplemental Unthinkables.

### Brain Eater



If Brain Eater gets in your brain, he makes you feel distracted! Defeat Brain Eater by turning away from distractors, think about the person talking, notice when your brain is thinking about something else, and *use a fidget to keep your body busy!*

### Worry Wall



If Worry Wall gets in your brain, you became so nervous, it's like you "hit a wall." Defeat Worry Wall using happy thoughts (think about favorite things), positive self talk, deep breathing, or *squeeze a fidget to calm anxious energy.*

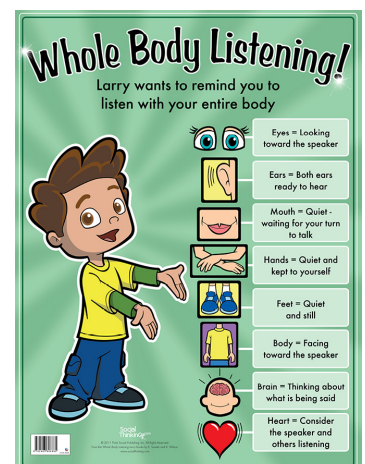


### Meet Energy Hare-y!

When Energy Hare-y gets in your brain, he gives you so much energy that you are constantly fidgeting or moving around. He doesn't think about what the people around him need or how others are feeling around them. Sometimes Energy Hare-y teams up with WasFunnyOnce (to be introduced!), which can quickly make the group fall apart.

### Strategies to Defeat Energy Hare-y

- Use Whole Body Listening when others are talking.
- Think with your eyes (look around) and see how the rest of the group is acting. Try to match how calm other kids are with their bodies.
- Take a few deep breaths to calm your body. *Use a fidget to keep your hands (or body or feet) quietly busy to get your fidgeting out without distracting or disrupting others!*



# More Fidgety Unthinkables!

## Blurt Out Blue

gets you to shout out answers to questions or make comments when it's not your turn. Blurt Out Blue doesn't notice when it's time to keep thoughts in their head.



### *Strategies to Defeat Blurt Out Blue*

- Think with your eyes to look if teacher is looking at you and about to call on you or if the speaker is about to finish.
- Keep your thought in your head or in journal if you are worried you might forget it.
- Use a fidget to help you wait

## Antsy Nancy

Makes you fidget or be impatient. Their bodies and brains have a hard time calming down enough to concentrate on work. Antsy Nancy often partners up with Worry Wall.



Antsy Nancy

### *Strategies to Defeat Antsy Nancy*

- Take calming breaths and count to (or count by) your favorite number
- Use a fidget as long as others around you can still pay attention.
- Take brain breaks (get a drink, help teacher, walking lap, etc.)
- Self talk: When I defeat Antsy Nancy I help myself *AND* others pay attention!



# Incorporating Fidgets in the Classroom

## Fidget Bins

Create a class-wide fidget bin. Students can get a fidget if they feel they need one or if an adult suggests it. This should be kept in an easy to access area that students can get to without distracting others. If allowing students to use fidgets as needed throughout the day, it will be important to establish rules for use in your classroom.



## Classroom Break Spots

A break spot can be utilized if a student needs a calming break or a short brain break. Break spots can incorporate strategies that can help both calm and refocus, such as fidgets, coloring/drawing tools, glitter bottles, sensory toys, etc.

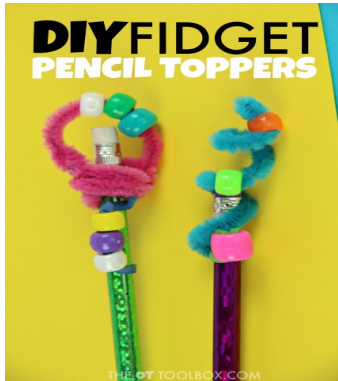
# Fidget Lending Library

Some teachers may prefer to create a lending library for fidgets. This can reduce arguments over who gets fidgets/how long they've had them or limit movement and frequent changing of fidgets during learning periods. Decide if students can check out fidgets for the day or the week.

[illegible]

## D.I.Y. FIDGETS

*For classrooms with students who may lose or break fidgets easily, you can save money by making a variety of fidgets yourself. Better yet, making your own fidgets can be a great STEAM activity and a fun project for your students. Below are some ideas for D.I.Y. fidgets to add to your classroom:*



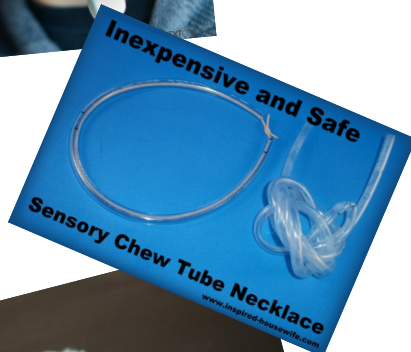
### Pencil Topper Fidget

Materials: Pencil (Regular or Mechanical), Rubber Bands, Pipe Cleaners, Beads. Steps: 1. Thread a rubber band through a bead 2. Wrap rubber band around top of pencil. 3. Add pipe cleaner by looping through the rubber band and around the pencil. Be creative with the shape. Add beads to the pipe cleaner & twist closed the ends.

### Weighted Fidget Toy

Materials: Winter Glove, Dried Beans

1. Fill a glove with dried beans with some sort of scooper or small cup. Fill to desired amount.
2. Sew or use hot glue gun to seal the glove closed.



### Chewable Fidgets Tools

- **Canadian DIY Supply** sells silicone beads that can be used for chewable zipper pulls or necklaces for oral sensory seeking behaviors. <https://canadiandiysupply.com/collections/silicone-beads>
- You can also create a necklace using clear plastic tubing from a building supply store.
- For *clothing chewers*, consider braiding three strips of fabric together to make a cloth chew bracelet. These should be sent home and washed frequently!



## ...D.I.Y. Fidgets Continued...

### Nuts & Bolts Fidget

Materials: 2 nuts and 1 or more bolts (you can use plastic toy nuts/bolts or real ones), hot glue.

Steps: Thread on the desired number of bolts onto one nut. Glue together the two ends of the nuts. Be careful to keep glue from the edges in order to keep an easy/smooth movement of the fidget.



### Foot Fidgets

Materials: Pool Noodles (with hole down center), Bungee Cords. Steps: Cut pool noodle to desired size. Thread the bungee cord through the noodle and attach to the legs of a chair. Students can bounce their feet without disrupting others.



### Sensory Seating

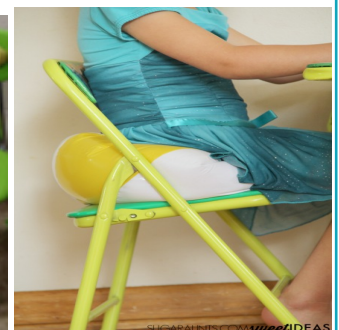
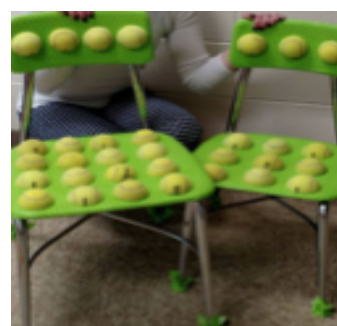
Incorporate flexible seating on a budget!

Cover chairs in contact paper. Cut *tennis balls* in half. Hot glue halved tennis balls to covered chair.

Inflate a *beach ball* with one or two breaths as a seat cushion.

Tape a pool noodle in a U-shape on a chair. Slices of pool noodles also make good fidgets for squeezing.

Place yoga balls in milk crates to keep from rolling away, but still provide bounce and balance.



## RESOURCES

An April Newsletter Resources folder has been shared with you on Google Drive with the full-size printable Fidget Rules visual.

*Find More DIY Fidget and Sensory Tools Inspiration at:*

More DIY Fidget Ideas:

<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/diy-fidget-toys/>

<https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/diy-fidget-toolkit-for-wiggly-kids.html>

More About Introducing Fidgets to the Classroom:

<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/introduce-fidget-toys-classroom/>

*Always feel free to pop in for a visit with your friendly school psychologist or send a quick email if you have any questions on how to use Fidgets effectively in your classroom!*

### *Feeling Inspired?*

Send along a photo or video of any creative fidgets you or your students may create! 😊



Thought of the Month:

*"I won't change the way*

**MY CHILD VIEWS THE  
WORLD.**

*Instead I will*

**CHANGE THE WAY THE  
WORLD VIEWS MY CHILD**

*-Anonymous*