

Think-Ups

"Like push-ups for your brain"

FOR SELF-REGULATION



Lynne Kenney, PsyD

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Musical Thinking on The Kinetic Classroom - Think-Ups

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Students with Dysregulation, Anxiety, Sensory Overload or Excessive Energy Can Benefit from Heavy Work

We often think of people as having five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Yet, there are two other senses that are central to self-regulation and calming. They are the vestibular sense which is responsible for balance and perception of body positioning in space and the proprioceptive sense which relays information about body awareness to the brain.

In order to help students manage their internal energy to attain and maintain an "alert state of calm" we engage the vestibular and proprioceptive systems to help with self-regulation.

Think-Ups are slow rhythmic activities that require a person to hold their own body weight as they move, engaging cognition and proprioception.

With Think-Ups we do a variety of heavy work activities using Musical Thinking. Heavy Work is often used by occupational therapists to help organize and connect the brain and body through the reticular activating system. Heavy work describes movements that create a pushing, holding, or pulling feeling in the muscles and joints in the body. When one pushes, pulls, holds heavy objects (such as a weighted ball) or one's own body weight in space, the vestibular and proprioceptive systems of the brain and body become engaged. The exertion associated with heavy work stimulates endorphins, neurotransmitters, increased blood flow and increased oxygenation, all beneficial for the brain.

When heavy work is done slowly and rhythmically it can be calming to the sensory and central nervous systems of the body. For students who need to self-regulate in the moment, Think-Ups can be very helpful.

To view video examples of how our students do Think-Ups visit:
<https://www.youtube.com/c/LynneKenney>





The Benefits of Heavy Work

- Heavy work provides proprioceptive input to the muscles and joints to help calm, organize and regulate the body. The exertion that comes with heavy work can also help decrease anxiety and impulsivity.
- Heavy work can help students develop better awareness of where their body is in space.
- Stationary heavy work can help ground the body, providing a sense of stability and calm.
- Coordinative rhythmic heavy work engages executive functions including but not limited to attention, memory, cognitive flexibility, response inhibition and self-regulation.
- Thoughtful heavy work can engage focused attention.

Counting & Cueing for Better Cognition

One novel way we do heavy work is to move in counts of 8 (not 10) which encourages rhythmic coordinative movement in 4/4 time. We also vary the counts to add cognition. As an example, when our students do wall sits, they alternate lifting their toes on the beat, 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, then they lift their right toe two times, then their left toe two times so it's 1 2: 3 4: 5 6: 7 8.

We do the same with wall push-ups, the students do a full push up then a slow half push-up the count is 1 2 (down) 3 4 (up) 2 x - whole push-up then they go half-way down in the push-up and hold for 1 2 and come up on 3 4, repeat two to three times. It sounds like this: 1 2; 3 4 (push-up); 1 2: 3 4 (push-up); half-way down hold 1 2; up hold 3 4; half-way down hold 1 2; up hold 3 4.

Planks are held for 8 counts. Then right leg is lifted slightly off the ground for 4 beats, then left leg is lifted off the ground (just a bit) for 4 beats, then the cycle begins again for a total of two to three times, depending on the strength and ability of the student. The cueing is "Up 2 3 down."

Tempo & Timing for Self-Regulation

1. Wheelbarrows (slow or super slow):

- a. Walk two beats, right hand, left hand; hold two beats, repeat.
- b. Walk two beats, right hand, left hand; cross touch forward, right hand, left hand, repeat.
- c. Walk two beats, right hand, left hand; hold two beats; push-up “down up” (two beats), repeat.

2. Trampoline:

- a. Bounce on both feet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8; now one foot at a time - right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left, repeat.
- b. Bounce two feet 1 2 3 4; now one foot at a time - right, left, right, left, repeat.
- c. Bounce two feet 1 2 3 4; now one foot at a time - right, left, right, left; right, right, left left, right, right, left, left, repeat.

3. Supermans: child is on their belly face down on the floor or yoga ball (slow or super slow):

- a. Both arms out in front above their head “lift 2 3 4”; arms to the ground “down 2 3 4”, repeat.
- b. Both arms out in front above their head “lift 2 3 4”; arms to the ground “down 2 3 4”; right arm “up 2”, “down 2”; left arm “up 2”, “down 2”, repeat.
- c. Both arms out in front above their head stationary on the ground. Right leg “up 2 3 4”, “down 2 3 4”; Left leg “up 2 3 4”, “down 2 3 4”. Right leg “up 2”, “down 2”; Left leg “up 2”, “down 2”, repeat.

Generally, we do 3-4 “sets” of each activity, this looks like 12, 16, 24 or 32 beats.



Activities

Here are some simple heavy work activities we teach in our Executive Functions in the Classroom course and in The Kinetic Classroom.

All of these activities are done "in Time on the Beat" using the Musical Thinking Rhythm Cards.

Movement in Space:

- Carrying heavy objects from point A to point B - sand, water, garden dirt, beans, bean bags
- Chair dips
- Doing supermans and swimmers on your tummy
- Double Dutch Jump Rope
- Jumping on a trampoline
- Jumping rope with a weighted or heavy rope
- Pushing a heavy moveable object such as a chair or desk
- Rhythmically passing a heavy bean bag or weighted ball from one hand to the other
- Rhythmically pumping with legs while swinging
- Rhythmically swinging on the monkey bars
- Walking, jumping and pushing against the wall on a sensory pathway





Activities

Stationary Holds (with rhythmic counting):

- Hanging from a gymnastics bar
- Plank position on the floor
- Push-ups
- Stationary balance positions on one foot (crane, flying eagle, standing in peaceful heart position)
- Wall-sit

Poses, Lifts and Plies (with rhythmic counting):

- Plies
- Rhythmically lifting with 1 lb hand weights
- Yoga poses
- Tai Chi poses



Activities

Large-Motor Heavy Play:

- Climbing up and down a slide
- Climbing up and down stairs while lunging
- Playing catch with bean bags
- Playing Hopscotch
- Playing on a See-Saw
- Pushing someone on a swing
- Riding a scooter on one's tummy
- Wheelbarrow walking

Hand Play:

- Digging and scooping in sand or bean trays
- Drumming on desks, yoga balls, drums
- Hand clapping and pushing games
- Play passing games with weighted stuffed animals, bean bags or balls
- Squeezing and manipulating play dough
- Water play (find objects in tubs, scoop and pour water with a cup)



Activities

You can do a Think-Up anytime, anywhere. You can use one as a brain primer before you teach a lesson. You can use Think-Ups before or after an exam. Your entire class can do a Think-Up in unison moving "in time on the beat together." Students can do Think-Ups at the back of the classroom if they need a moment of self-regulation, cognitive alerting or calming. We've done Think-Ups on basketball courts, in gyms, even on line at the movie theatre or waiting for dinner outside at a restaurant. Think-Ups are creative, flexible and fun. Encourage your students to make up their own beat sequences, movements and activities.

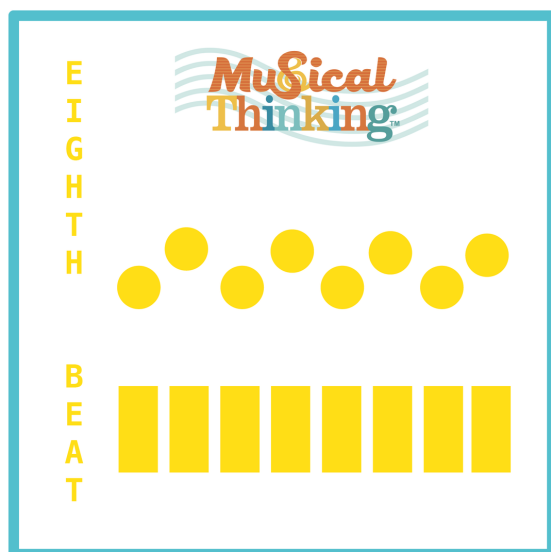
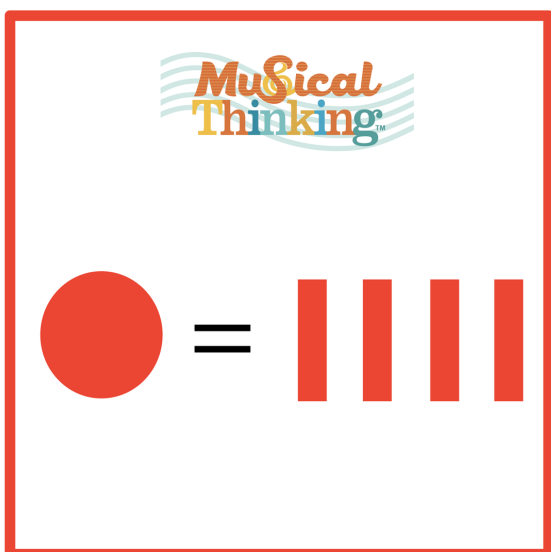
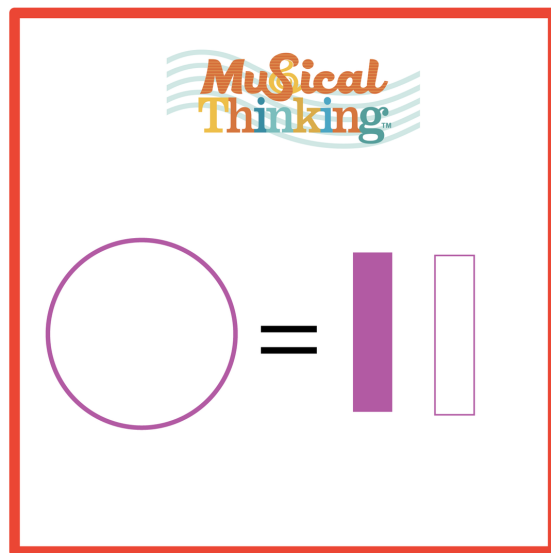
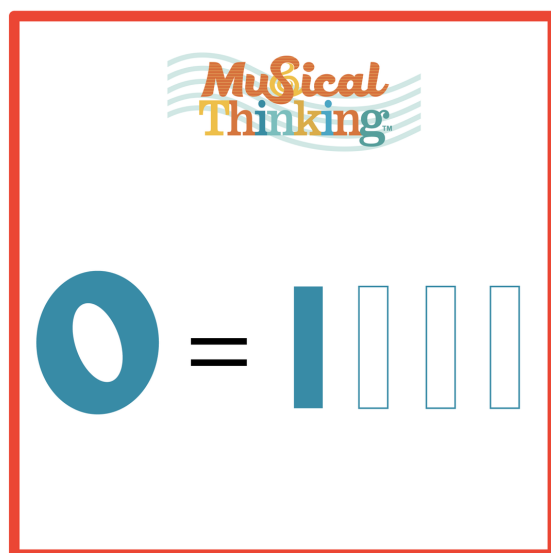
On the next page you will find the **Musical Thinking Rhythm Cards** with our cognitive-visual language for four beats.

- The whole beat, one beat per four count measure.
- The half-beat, two beats per four count measure.
- The quarter beat, four beats per four count measure.
- The eighth beat, eight beats per four count measure.

Watch the "Meet the Beats" video for more elaboration. In that video I encourage to clap out a few beats to familiarize yourself with the simple rhythms. After you read and practice tapping, clapping, stomping or moving to the various beats then you'll be ready to try a few Think-Ups.



Musical Thinking Rhythm Cards for Think-Ups





Think-Ups Push-Ups

Count Aloud as You Move

1



4 Count Push-ups

Whole push-up 1 2 (down)
3 4 (up).
Repeat 3-4 sets.

2



4 Count Push-up Holds

Whole push-up 1 2 (down)
3 4 (up). Hold (up) 2 3 4.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

3



8 Count Push-ups Super Slow

Whole push-up 1 2 (down)
3 4 (up). Half-way down on
5 6 slowly up on 7 8.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

4



Half Push-up Holds Super Slow

Whole push-up 1 (down)
hold 2 3 4. Half-way up on
5 6 all the way up on 7 8.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

5



8 Count Pulse Push-ups Super Slow

Whole push-up 1 (down)
hold 2 3 4. Up on 5
pulse 6 7 8.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

6



4 Count Leg Push-ups

Push-up position. Right leg
"up 2 3 down", Left leg "up
2 3 down".
Repeat 3-4 sets.



Think-Ups Wall Sits

Count Aloud as You Move

1



8 Count Wall Sit
Toe Tap

Wall Sit. Tap right toe, left
toe alternating
R L R L R L R L
Repeat 3-4 sets.

2



8 Count Wall Sit
Double Toe Tap

Wall Sit. Tap right toe, left toe
alternating
R L R L R L R L
R R L L R R L L
Repeat 3-4 sets.

3



8 Count Wall Sit
Toe Tap Paradiddle

Wall Sit. Tap right toe, left toe
alternating
R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R
Repeat 3-4 sets.

4



4 Count Wall Sit
Toe Tap Paradiddle

Wall Sit. Tap right toe, left toe
alternating
R L R L
L R L R
Repeat 3-4 sets.

5



8 Count Wall Sit Bean Bag Pass
Wall Sit.

Pass bean bag alternating hands
R L R L R L R L
On 4th and 8th beats tap the
corresponding toe.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

6



8 Count Wall Sit Bean Bag Pass
Colors & Animals
Wall Sit.

Pass bean bag alternating hands
R L R L R L R L
On 4th and 8th beats name the
laminated color or animal.
Repeat 3-4 sets.



Think-Ups Planks

Count Aloud as You Move

1



8 Count Plank
Heel Press

Plank. Heel Press right heel,
left heel alternating
R L R L R L R L
Repeat 3-4 sets.

2



8 Count Plank
Double Heel Press

Plank. Heel Press right heel, left
heel alternating
R L R L R L R L
RR LL RR LL
Repeat 3-4 sets.

3



8 Count Elbow Press
Paradiddle

Plank. Press right and left elbow with
a slight weight shift alternating
R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R
Repeat 3-4 sets.

4



4 Count Elbow Press
Paradiddle

Plank. Press right and left elbow with
a slight weight shift alternating
R L R L
L R L R
Repeat 3-4 sets.

5



8 Count Elbow Press
Paradiddle Pause

Plank on knees. Press right and left
elbow with a slight weight shift
alternating R L R L L R L R
Pause shift weight and move hips
toward heels, hold, return.
Repeat 3-4 sets.

6



8 Count Elbow Press Paradiddle
Pause Side to Side

Plank on knees. Press right and left
elbow with a slight weight shift
alternating R L R L L R L R
Pause shift weight and move hips
back toward right heel then left heel,
return to neutral. Repeat 3-4 sets.



Write Your Own Beat-Based Rhythmic Activities

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Thinking*

*MuSical
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Thinking*



In Closing...

I truly hope that Think-Ups bring a sense of alert calm to you, your students and clients. It is my honor and joy to work with students, educators, and clinicians around the world. You are invited to share your classroom videos with our community of educators and clinicians on social media as well Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, @drlynnkenney #TheKineticClassroom.

The students LOVE meeting people from other countries. Together we can bring more cognitive-motor engagement for better thinking, learning, self-regulation and behavior to students in high-need environments worldwide.



Resources

www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/heavy-work-activities

www.childmind.org/article/sensory-processing-faq

www.out-of-sync-child.com

www.theottoolbox.com

www.sensory-processing.middletonautism.com/sensory-strategies/strategies-according-to-sense/proprioceptive

www.lemonlimeadventures.com/proprioceptive-input-sensory-processing-explained

www.yourkidstable.com/proprioceptive-activities

www.sensorysmarts.com