

# A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

## FOCUSED ATTENTION PRACTICES (FOAPS)

**Focused Attention Practices (FoAPs)** are **short, intentional activities that ask children to deliberately place and hold their attention on one thing** — for example, their breath, a sound, a movement, or a sensory experience.

The aim is not relaxation alone, but **training the brain's capacity to notice, sustain, and gently return attention** when it drifts.

### WHAT?

**In child-friendly terms, FoAPs help children practise:**

- noticing where their attention is
- bringing it back when it wanders
- doing this without judgement or pressure

**They are typically:**

- brief (30 seconds to 3 minutes)
- predictable and repeatable
- calm but alert (not “switching off”)

A **Focused Attention Practice** is different from a **brain break**. While brain breaks change up the routine, FoAPs specifically aim to quiet the thousands of thoughts that distract and frustrate us each day, allowing the mind to become present with a specific sound, sight, or taste.

**FoAPs** directly support skills that underpin learning, behaviour and wellbeing — particularly for children whose nervous systems are under frequent stress.

### WHY?

**They help children:**

- practise pausing before reacting
- build awareness of body and emotional signals
- strengthen attention “muscles” needed for learning
- experience success with self-regulation (not just be told to regulate)

**For staff, FoAPs:**

- are low-prep and time-efficient
- support calm transitions without control or shaming
- work well as whole-class routines (not targeted interventions)
- can be used proactively, not only after dysregulation

“Something we practise together to help our brains grow stronger.”



### IN PRIMARY SEL?

**FoAPs** align strongly with core SEL competencies:

- **Self-awareness**
  - Children learn to notice internal states (busy, calm, wobbly, steady).
- **Self-management**
  - They practise strategies that influence attention and regulation.
- **Relationship skills**
  - Shared calm, predictable routines support co-regulation and trust.
- **Responsible decision-making**
  - Pausing attention supports impulse control and thoughtful responses.

### FIND MORE

**Lori Desautels** has played a key role in adapting and popularising FoAPs for schools as part of [Applied Educational Neuroscience](#).

Dr Desautels has some excellent examples of FoAPs **free** to download from her Revelations in Education [website](#).

### SEE ALSO

- Brain Breaks
- Applied Educational Neuroscience
- Executive Functioning Skills
- EASEL Kernels