

SMELL THE COFFEE

We all know how to straighten our posture when we want to get a whiff of some wonderful smell, whether it's perfume, an ocean breeze, or cinnamon buns. The sense of smell is one of the keenest senses. Over long periods of time, its memory is the most accurate of the senses. Here is an example that compares visual memory with olfactory (smell) memory. Most people remember what their old grade school looked like, but when they go back for a visit they find it's much smaller than they remembered. That visual memory wasn't quite accurate. But smell is different. Over many years we remember smells well, and we remember them accurately. Mom's fresh baked bread? Kindergarten lunches? Fresh mowed lawn, or hay? An ocean breeze? We recognize those smells quickly and right as rain.

For this activity, it's the smells of fresh-brewed morning coffee that participants want to find. Smell the Coffee is a fun, quick, and easy activity that marries deep breathing and a natural back-lengthening movement. It will help participants lift into tall, ribs-lifted posture, with abdominals braced and head and shoulders retracted and aligned. This combination enhances posture and core stability. Use it for those times at the beginning of class when you look out at your participants and they don't seem quite ready for exercise. Maybe they're slumping and not yet smiling . . . it's as if they need a wake-up call. Smell the Coffee can come to the rescue and whisk away those doldrums. Pretty soon, participants may start liking this activity better than actual coffee!

Benefits »

- ⦿ Helps participants achieve tall sitting posture.
- ⦿ Uses memorable cues to evoke an ingrained sequence for tall sitting.
- ⦿ Begins posture exercises in a fun, easy, and social way with a warm and fuzzy feel.

Set It Up »

Come up with a list of smells that would be easily recognizable by participants. Talk with your participants about their memories of favorite smells. Maybe laugh about some awful smells we remember just as well. Share some of your own favorite smells or smell memories. Then invite participants to do a little imaginative smelling.

How to Do It »

Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Try to find a favorite smell. (Mention some of the responses they said earlier.) Smell deeply. Can you smell it?
- ⦿ Did your posture change with your deep breath? Are you sitting taller to catch that smell?
- ⦿ Again, image the scent drifting by on a breeze. Can you smell it?
 - Ask them to notice their posture.
 - Did they sit up tall?
 - Did they pull their back away from the back of the chair?
 - Did they lift their ribs, their head, and their spine?

Now they are ready to try the activity again. This time they'll have the concept in their mind and will know what they're doing for posture. You might say something such as, "Okay everyone, wake up and smell the coffee! Give me a tall sit and take a deep breath in!" Here are some cues to use:

- ⊙ Bring your back away from the back of the chair.
- ⊙ Breathe in and pull yourself up tall.
- ⊙ Abdominals in.
- ⊙ Ribs . . . spine . . . lifted.
- ⊙ Smell the coffee? Enjoy the great aroma and smile.
- ⊙ Exhale slowly and pull the shoulder blades back and down.

Progress the activity by adding some flexibility. Give the stretches a morning theme to fit with smelling the coffee. The next stretch can be a good-morning yawn. They reach up with one arm and breathe in deeply, as if yawning and stretching, and then reach with the other. They can push their arms out and around their back. It's their morning coffee with you!

Keep It Safe »

Although this activity should be safe and fun for just about anyone, too many deep breaths in row may leave some participants out of breath or even dizzy. Remind them to take their time and be gentle.

Live It »

Smell the Coffee—three simple words that cue participants to sit tall and breathe deeply. It has a way of marrying deep breaths with tall, centered, and balanced postures. It feels natural and benefits participants greatly!