

Why is the 'learning state' useful?

When our minds are super busy and overwhelmed, it is **difficult to concentrate**.

When we are **very stressed or anxious** and our amygdala (the part of our brain that surveys our environment for threats) is '**living**' in a **fear state**, our '**executive function**' (the part of our brain that is responsible for planning, decision making, rational thinking amongst other things), can '**go off line**' and make 'thinking straight' impossible.

When stressed, we have a more **difficult time creating short-term memories and turning those short-term memories into long-term memories**. This means that it is more **difficult to learn and retain learning when stressed**.

Often people who are highly anxious will talk about having '**tunnel vision**' and not taking in information fully through all the senses, again making learning more difficult.

So creating an internal environment that can quickly **focus the brain, calm the mind body system, expand awareness and put the brain into an alpha state** (which enables **faster learning** and a **higher rate of information retention**) in less than 3 minutes is worth practicing!

How to create the learning state:

1. With the head looking straight ahead (chin parallel to the ground), focus your eyes on a spot at the front of the room that is above the eye-line.
It can be useful to put something on the wall so that the students have something to focus on. This should be close to the ceiling of a standard height class room.
2. Keeping your chin parallel to the floor concentrate on the focus spot (so the eyes are raised not the head).
3. Take a deep breath from your belly and let it out slowly as you become aware of the seat that is supporting you and feeling safe.
4. As you continue to breathe normally, and focussing your eyes on the focus spot, gradually allow yourself to bring your peripheral vision into play. Noticing what is around you to your left and right as far around you as you can. This is relaxed awareness.
5. Expand your awareness more and more so that you are aware of the ceiling, the floor and the furniture and people around you, even though you are still focussing on that single spot on the wall in front of you.
6. Wrap that awareness around you whilst still keeping your eyes on the focus spot, becoming aware of what is behind you as well as in front and to the side.
7. Lower your eyes to your teacher / work whilst keeping this expanded awareness.

When to use the learning state?

At the beginning of a lesson

At the start of each new subject if using one classroom for all learning

Before studying for exams or starting homework

Before taking exams to calm the mind and allow access to prior learning

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For more information about The Learning State visit NLPforeducation.com

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