

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the Braincalm™ Intensive?

Braincalm™ Intensive is an evidence based and well researched program of occupational therapy exercises where a child is taken for 20 minutes a day and brought through these exercises for a specific length of time and in a specific order. It has been developed by Brenda Cassidy occupational therapist and based on occupational therapy exercises originally researched and developed during the 1970s by Jean Ayres and in recent years by Jane Horwood.

Q. Is Braincalm™ Intensive effective?

Braincalm™ Intensive has been piloted through 2016 and 2017 by Brenda Cassidy OT in numerous primary schools. We have trained thousands of preschool staff, school staff, parents, sports coaches, children's yoga teachers and play therapists to use Braincalm™ Intensive to help many children in various settings. It has shown to be extremely effective in about 80% of children who suffer from anxiety, behavioural issues, sensory issues and ASD.

Q. How does it work?

Braincalm™ Intensive roots come from the long researched area of sensory integration. The Braincalm™ Intensive activities work to help smooth out “traffic jams” in the brain and help to smooth the “bridge” between the left and right sides of the brain.

Q. What is the cost of the equipment for Braincalm™ Intensive?

If you are a parent, the cost of the equipment is around €100, \$150 or about £80-90. You can buy it online quite cheaply. If you are a school staff member and are purchasing equipment for a group of 3 children, the total cost should be around €150, \$200, or about £120.

Q. Do I need to complete Braincalm™ Intensive with the child **every day** for it to be effective?

Yes, you should complete Braincalm™ Intensive at least 5 times a week for about 15 minutes. You can give the child a break on Saturday and Sunday for example.

Q. If I only complete Braincalm™ Intensive once or twice a week with the child will it be effective?

No, it needs to be completed 5 times a week for it to be effective. From experience, if a child does not take part in Braincalm™ Intensive for a day or a few days they will often ask for it as they miss it!

Q. Should I take each child out individually before starting Braincalm™ Intensive with the group do see what level each child is at?

Definitely, this is a great idea, as such do a trial run with each child individually. It will also give the child more confidence, so they have an idea what to expect in the Braincalm™ Intensive sessions. For example, you can check how much air the child needs in the wobble cushion or what size of ball will challenge them the most.

Q. Should the child take a break from Braincalm™ Intensive after 6 weeks or each block?

It is not necessary, but in schools there is usually a one week break after each 6 week block to monitor how well the child has responded to the program. Sometimes the positive changes in the child are very subtle and it is only when we stop doing Braincalm™ Intensive with the child that we really realize how many benefits it had. During that week the practitioner should talk with the class teacher and the parent to ascertain if the child is less settled.

Q. Is Braincalm™ Intensive suitable for all children?

It is suitable for children who have sensory issues, some children with anxiety, behaviour issues but also many children with ADHD and autism (ASD). It may be used to help children with other conditions. However, it is **not suitable** for children who have had brain surgery, a brain tumour or epilepsy. We always would advise that you contact a doctor if in doubt.

Q. If a child cannot do some of the activities due to poor coordination or core weakness can I readjust them?

Yes. Please see the PDF documents that go along with the videos. Alternative and easier options are explained in the videos.

Q. Do I need to make changes in the activities during the 6 week block?

Yes, sometimes you possibly may have to. Always follow this rule: the child should always be **challenged to their maximum level** in order for **them to stay focused** and here are some ideas. If the child finds the wobble cushion too easy to stand on, add some air. If the child finds throwing and catching a large ball too easy to throw and catch, give him a smaller ball such as a tennis ball instead. This will make it much harder for the child and he will have to return to 'focus'.

Q. Is Braincalm™ Intensive for building strength and coordination?

No, the **purpose** of Braincalm™ Intensive is to organise and calm the brain. However, the nature of the exercises mean that a positive by-product is increased core strength better coordination- even sometimes increased leg strength.





Q. If a child refuses to do some or all of the activities what should I do?

If you are a parent doing the Braincalm™ Intensive with the child at home it is strongly encouraged that you do even one little piece of Braincalm™ Intensive per day possibly in 5 minute chunks until the child gets used to it. Indeed, you may consider offering a reward at the start because the child does not know Braincalm™ Intensive but after completing the 20 minutes he will realize how good it feels.

If you are practicing Braincalm™ Intensive in school and are taking children in groups of 3, one of the children may refuse to do some or all of the exercises. If this is the case allow the child to sit out for some of the exercises, then encourage him or her to join in 1 or 2 of the exercises bit by bit. We have found that because they are doing it with some of their peers that children will often not want to be left out. They will see the exercises are quite doable and fun and they will often eventually join in.

Q. How quickly should I see positive changes in the child?

In some cases, we have seen almost immediate positive affects within a day or two of starting Braincalm™ Intensive. The child may appear calmer, more attentive to work and less fidgety.

However often children are a little more dysregulated during the 1st week of Braincalm™ Intensive because it is **something new** but we usually see that from week two onwards the child becomes calmer and more focused in class and indeed shows many other positive changes too, such as more self-esteem, less anxiety, better sitting and writing and even better ability to socialize- even if it is just with those in his Braincalm™ Intensive class.

Q. Do I have to bring children from the **same class** into the same Braincalm™ Intensive session?

No, this is not necessary. It is a good idea to mix the 3 children up. Even bringing 3 different children with varying ages can be an option. For example, bringing together a highly anxious child, a fidgety child and 'low' sloth-like child can work really well together. If you have two extremely 'high' brain fizzy children and dysregulated children who shout out and speak out off turn continuously they will likely dysregulate each other.



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Q. I have an older child who will start to complete Braincalm™ Intensive every morning before school. Can I start to leave the child to complete Braincalm™ Intensive by himself after 2 or 3 days?

Yes, when the child becomes familiar with all of the activities, and you are sure that he is being **challenged to his maximal level** go ahead and let him do the exercises by himself every morning. However, please check every week that he is being challenged otherwise he will become dysregulated again. You will need to check that the activities are hard enough for him and that he is not becoming bored.

Q. What is the best time of the day to take a child through Braincalm™ Intensive?

If you are a parent, you will usually bring the child through Braincalm™ Intensive in the morning before school or possibly in the evening before they start their homework. Sometimes Braincalm™ Intensive is completed with the child by the parent before the child goes to bed.

If the school is completing Braincalm™ Intensive with the child, we often have the children come in and get started in school and then at around 10 o'clock we start to bring them out for Braincalm™ Intensive. We have found that this is often the best time of day. However, some children who are very "brain fizzy" or quite high after coming in from a noisy yard during lunch break may benefit from completing Braincalm™ Intensive at that stage of the day.

Q. My child has started doing Braincalm™ Intensive every day. Should I take away his fidget toys and wobble cushion for squirming in class?

No, it is highly likely that the child will still require quiet fidgets to attend for the rest of the day and also, will still require the wobble cushion for sitting on to reduce squirming and to give sensory feedback for better concentration and learning throughout the rest of the day.

Q. My son's siblings want to join in with the exercises. Should I allow them?

Yes! Many children would benefit from the exercises, and it may also encourage your son to complete Braincalm™ Intensive with his siblings.



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