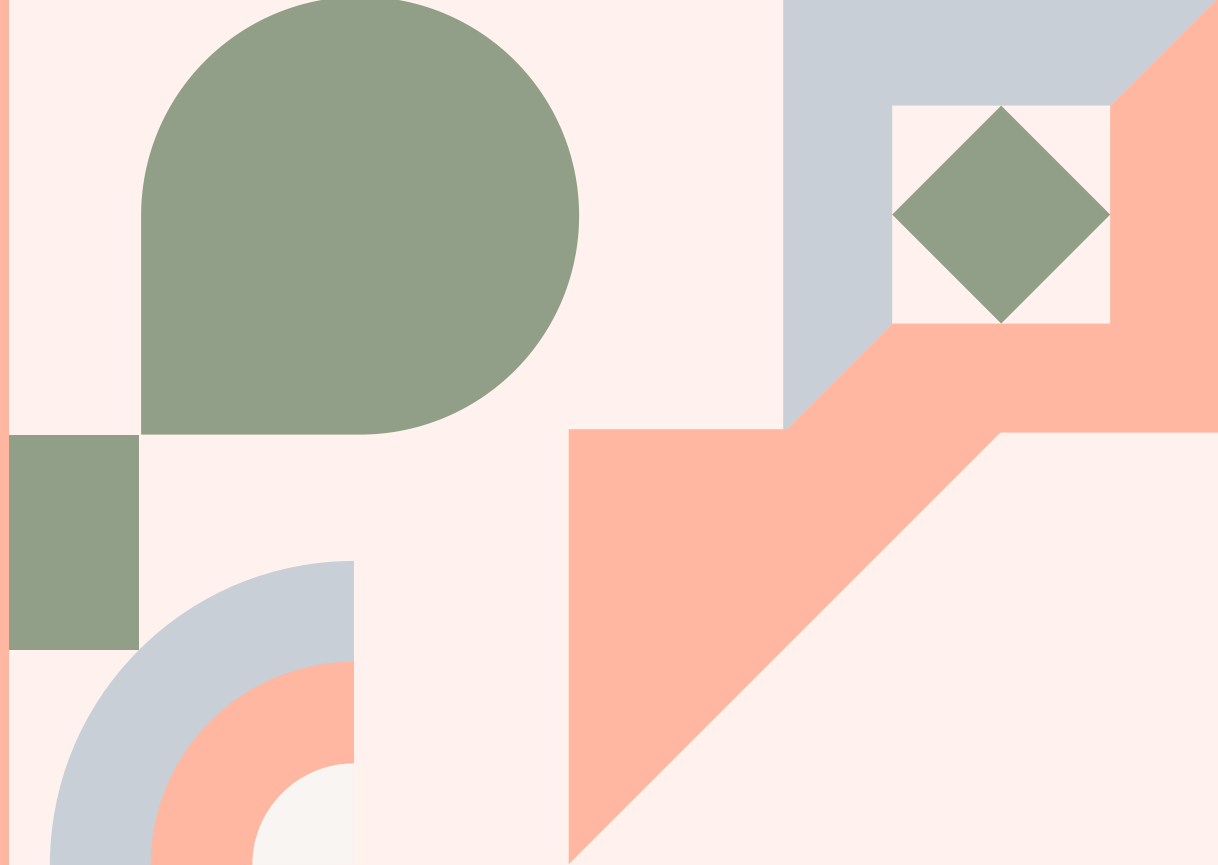
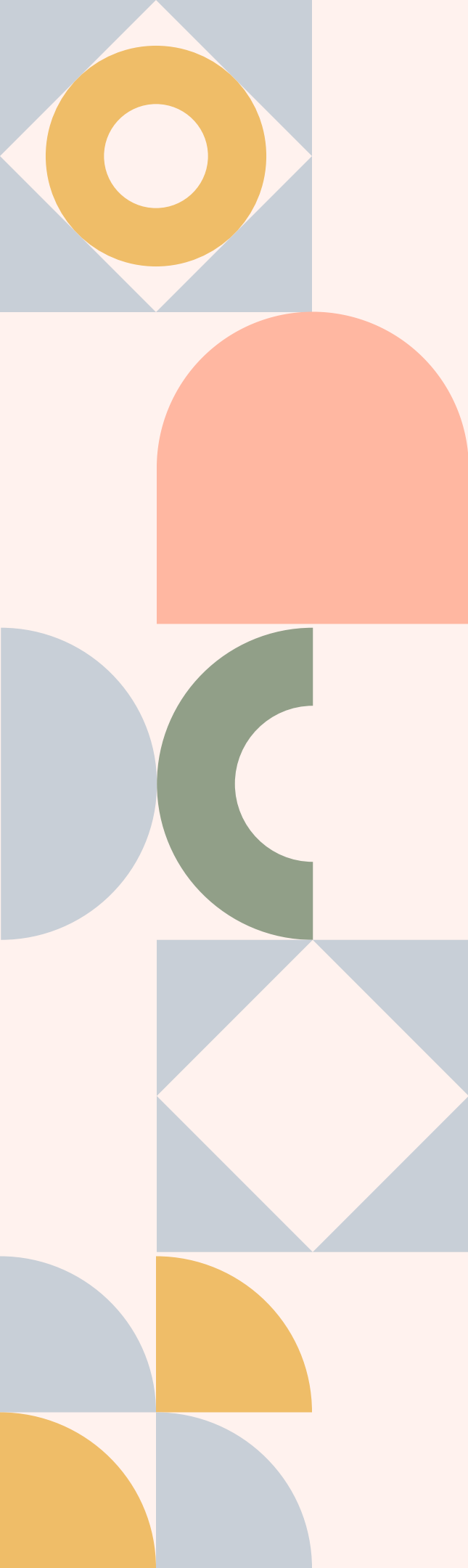


# Starter Routines

A step-by-step guide for elementary teachers who want less chaos and more calm — without working harder.

By Deanna O'Halloran  
The Thriving Classroom



# About Me

I have wanted to be a teacher since I learned to read! I hold double Master's degrees in Elementary Education and Educational Psychology from Portland State University and University of Arizona, where I graduated with honors. With over a 11 years of experience in the classroom, I have been working with learners of all ages since 2010. I call Portland Oregon home with my family and 2 dogs!

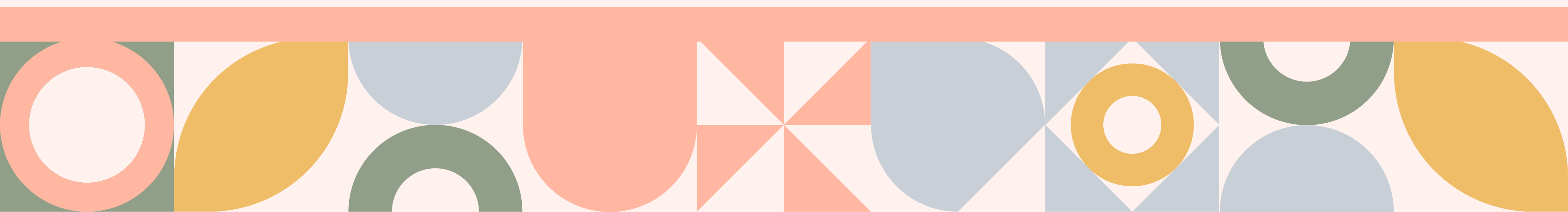


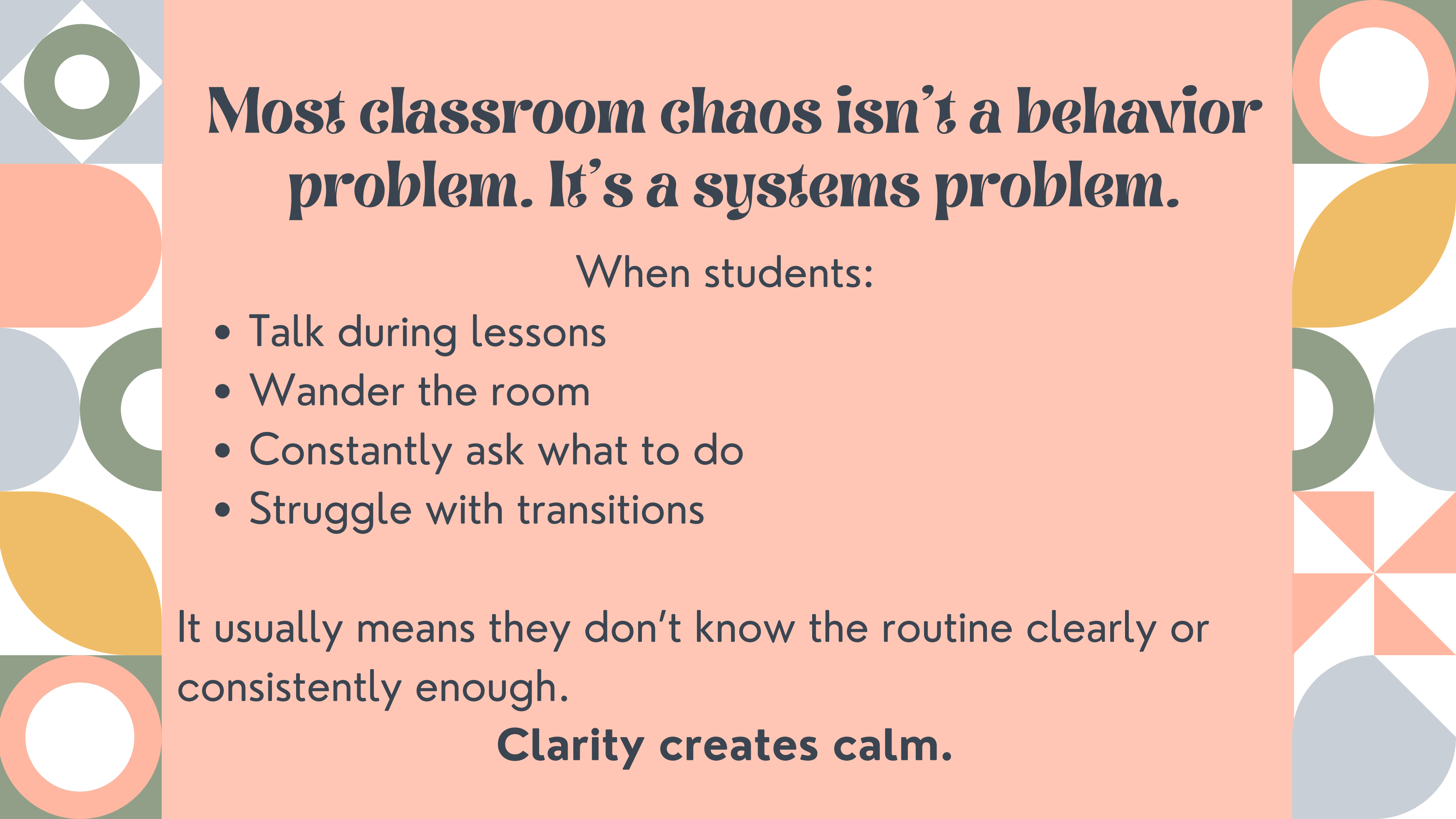
# ***You don't need to work harder. You need better systems.***

If your classroom feels loud, chaotic, or exhausting, I want you to know something:

- 👉 It's not because you're bad at teaching.
- 👉 It's not because your students are "too much."
- 👉 It's almost always because your room needs clearer routines.

This guide will walk you through the **exact** starter routines I use to create a calmer, more independent classroom.





# **Most classroom chaos isn't a behavior problem. It's a systems problem.**

When students:

- Talk during lessons
- Wander the room
- Constantly ask what to do
- Struggle with transitions

It usually means they don't know the routine clearly or consistently enough.

**Clarity creates calm.**



# *Your classroom should run on systems, not your energy.*

If you are:

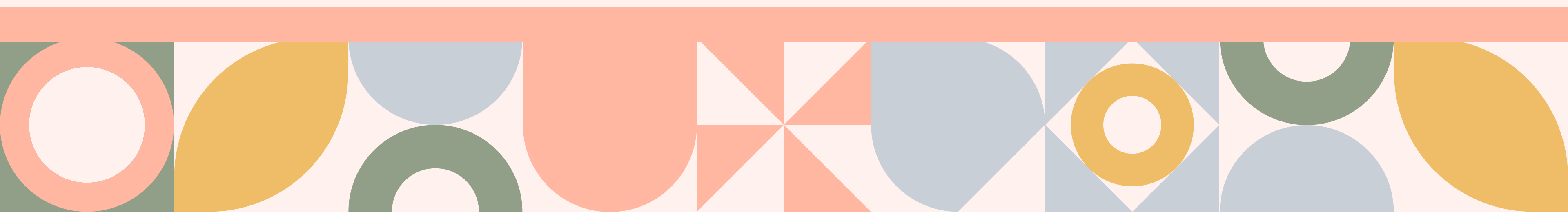
- Repeating directions all day
- Putting out fires constantly
- Going home exhausted

Your routines aren't doing enough of the work for you yet.

**Let's fix that.**



## *Start with:*

1. Pick ONE routine to focus on this week
  2. Teach it explicitly
  3. Practice it consistently
  4. Don't move on until it feels automatic
- Small systems = big change.**
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# Routine #1: The Calm Start Routine

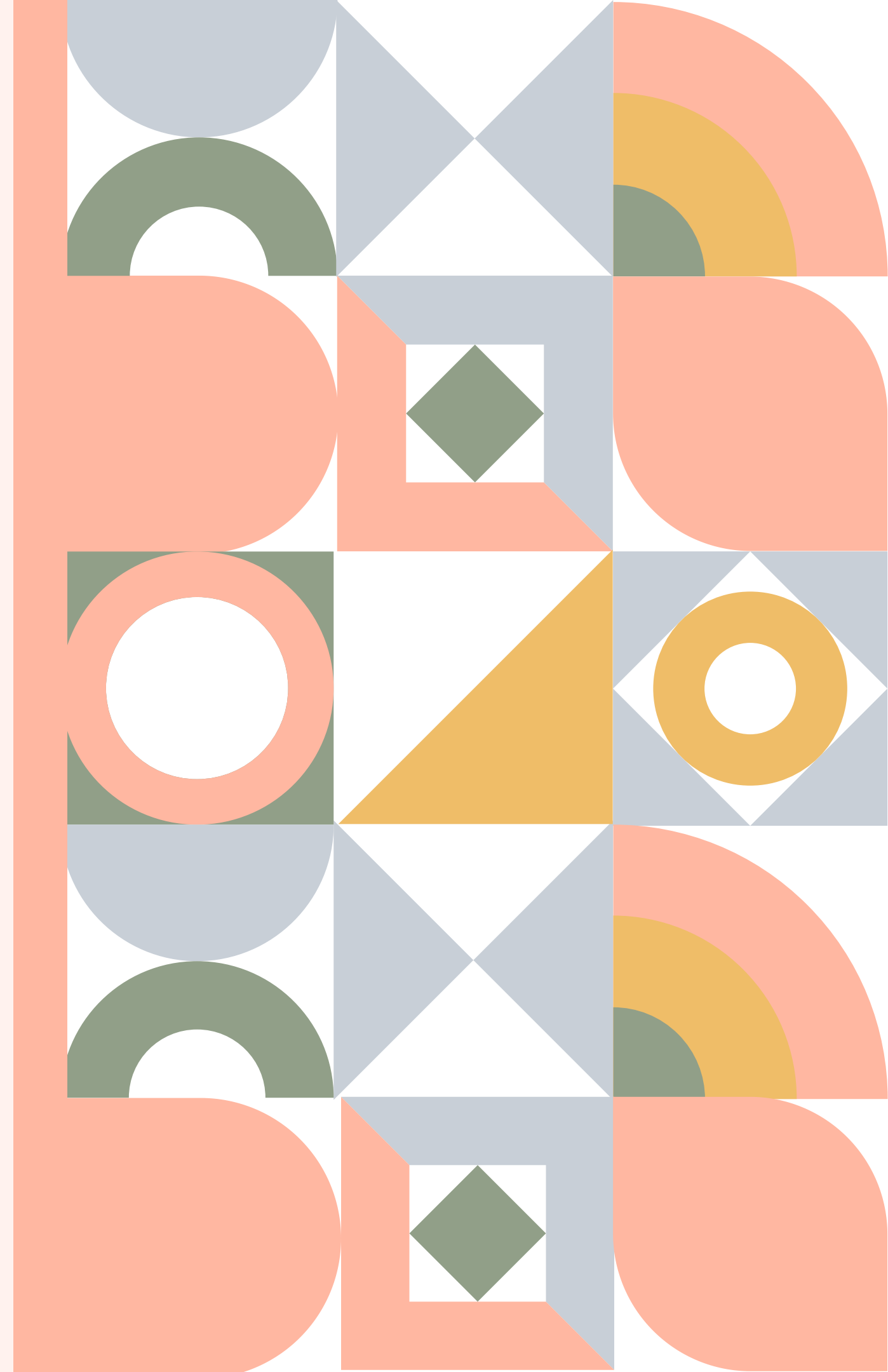
**What it is:** The same simple task students do every single morning when they enter the room.

## Why it matters:

- Sets the tone for the entire day
- Eliminates chaos and wandering
- Builds independence immediately

## What it looks like:

- Students enter
- Unpack
- Start the posted task
- No verbal directions needed





## How to Teach It

1. Show them exactly what to do
2. Practice it
3. Redo it if needed
4. Praise the routine, not the kids

### **Say:**

"This is how we start our day in this classroom."

# Routine #2: The Transition Routine

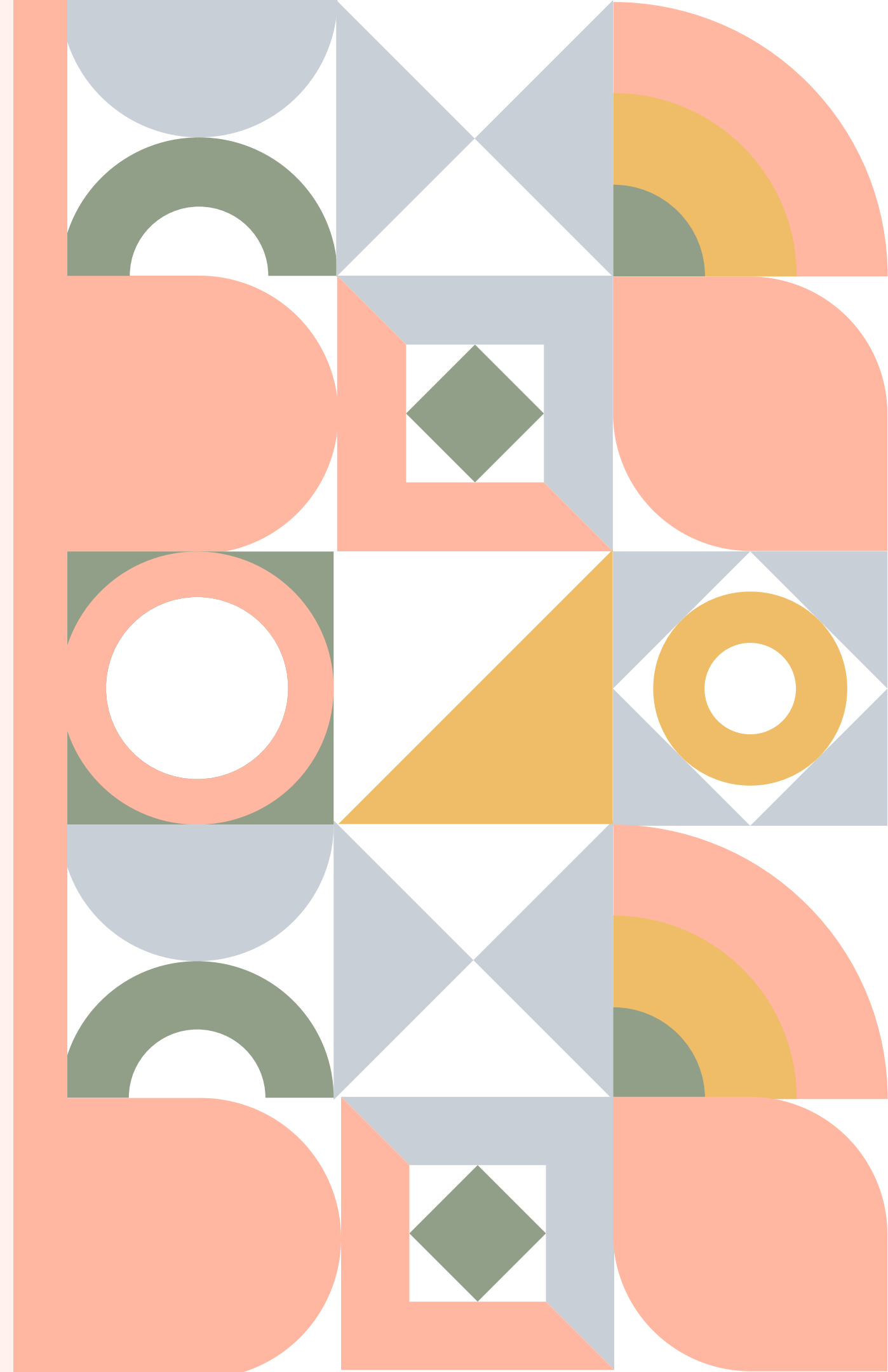
**What it is:** A consistent way students move from one activity to another.

## **Why it matters:**

Most behavior problems happen during transitions.

## **What it looks like:**

- What it looks like:
- Clear signal
- Clear steps
- Same order every time





## How to Teach It

1. Narrate the steps
2. Practice it when you're NOT in a rush
3. Time it
4. Celebrate improvement

### Say:

"Let's practice that transition again so it's smooth and calm."

# Routine #3: The Attention Signal

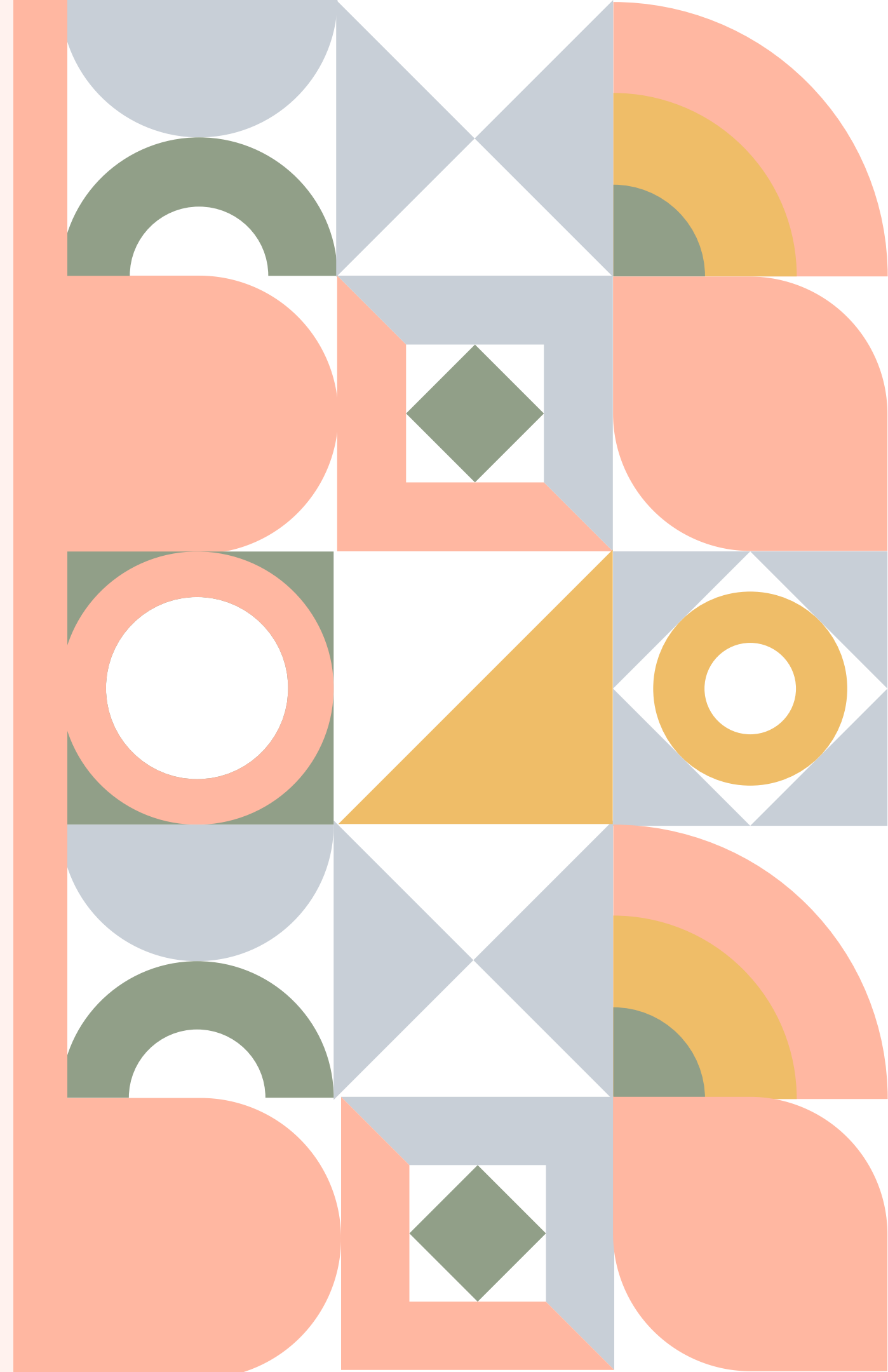
**What it is:** A consistent, simple way to get the class quiet and focused.

## Why it matters:

- Saves your voice
- Stops you from talking over kids
- Creates instant structure

## Examples:

- Call and response
- Hand signal
- Countdown
- Clapping pattern





## How to Teach It

1. Teach it explicitly
2. Practice it like a game
3. Use it every time
4. Wait for 100% before speaking

### Say:

"In this classroom, we stop and listen when we see/hear this."

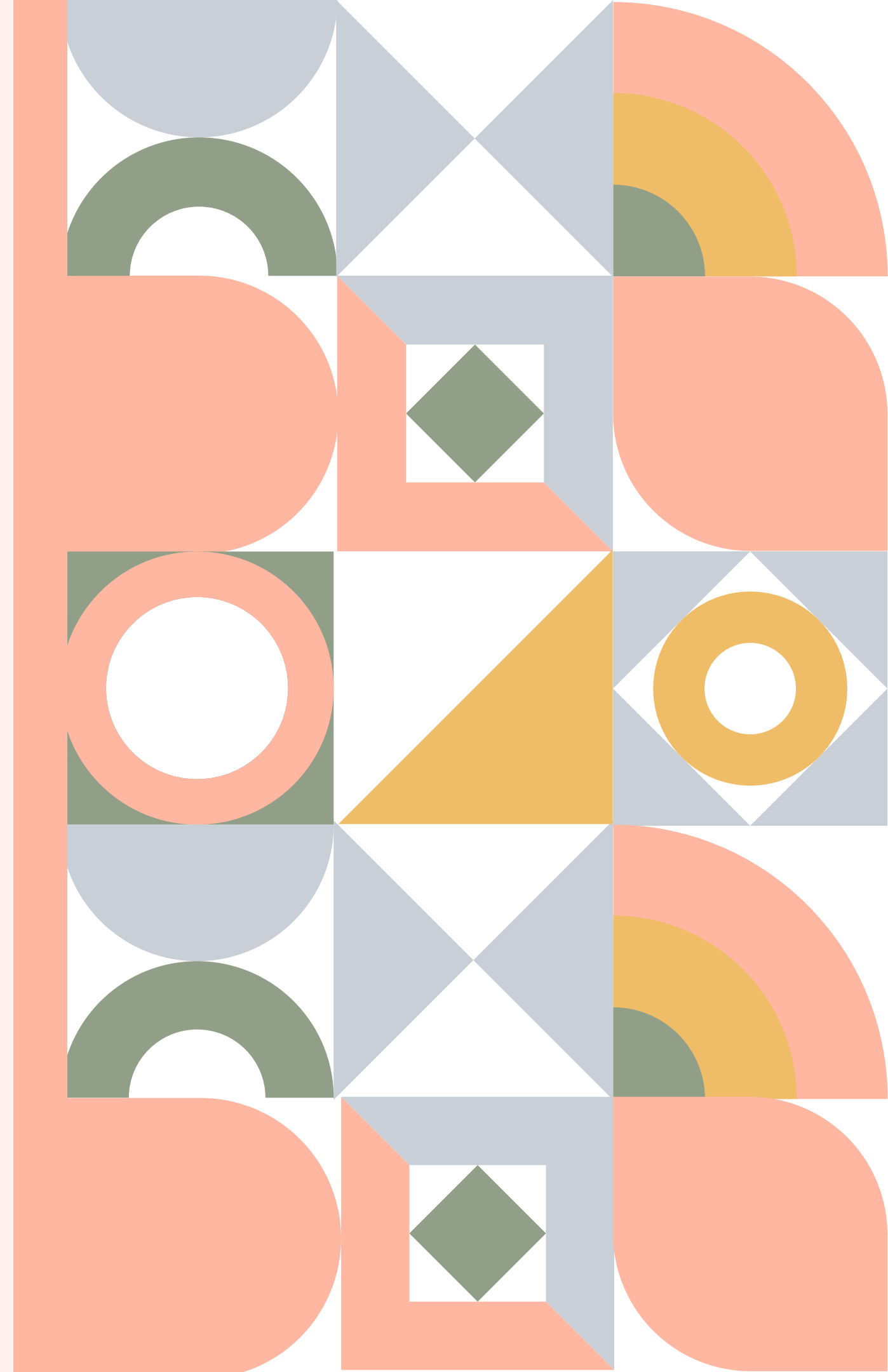
# Routine #4: The “What Do I Do?” Routine

**What it is:** What students do when they’re done, stuck, or waiting.

## **Why it matters:**

This eliminates...

- Wandering
- Calling out
- Interrupting small groups





## How to Teach It

Create a simple anchor chart:

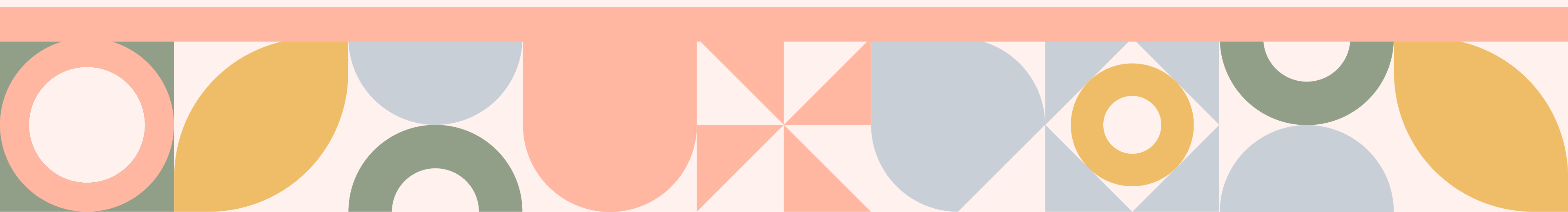
1. If I'm done → I \_\_\_\_\_
2. If I'm stuck → I \_\_\_\_\_
3. If I'm waiting → I \_\_\_\_\_

Practice this like any other routine.



# *The Secret to Making This Work*

## **Consistency beats perfection.**

- You don't need fancy systems
  - You need **clear, practiced, protected routines**
  - The magic is in doing them the same way every day
- 

# Start Small!

## **This week, choose ONE:**

- Morning routine
- Transition routine
- Attention signal
- Independence routine

Build it. Protect it. Let it carry some of the load for you.



***Your classroom doesn't have to feel  
this hard.***

You're not meant to hold everything together with your energy alone.

Systems can do that for you.



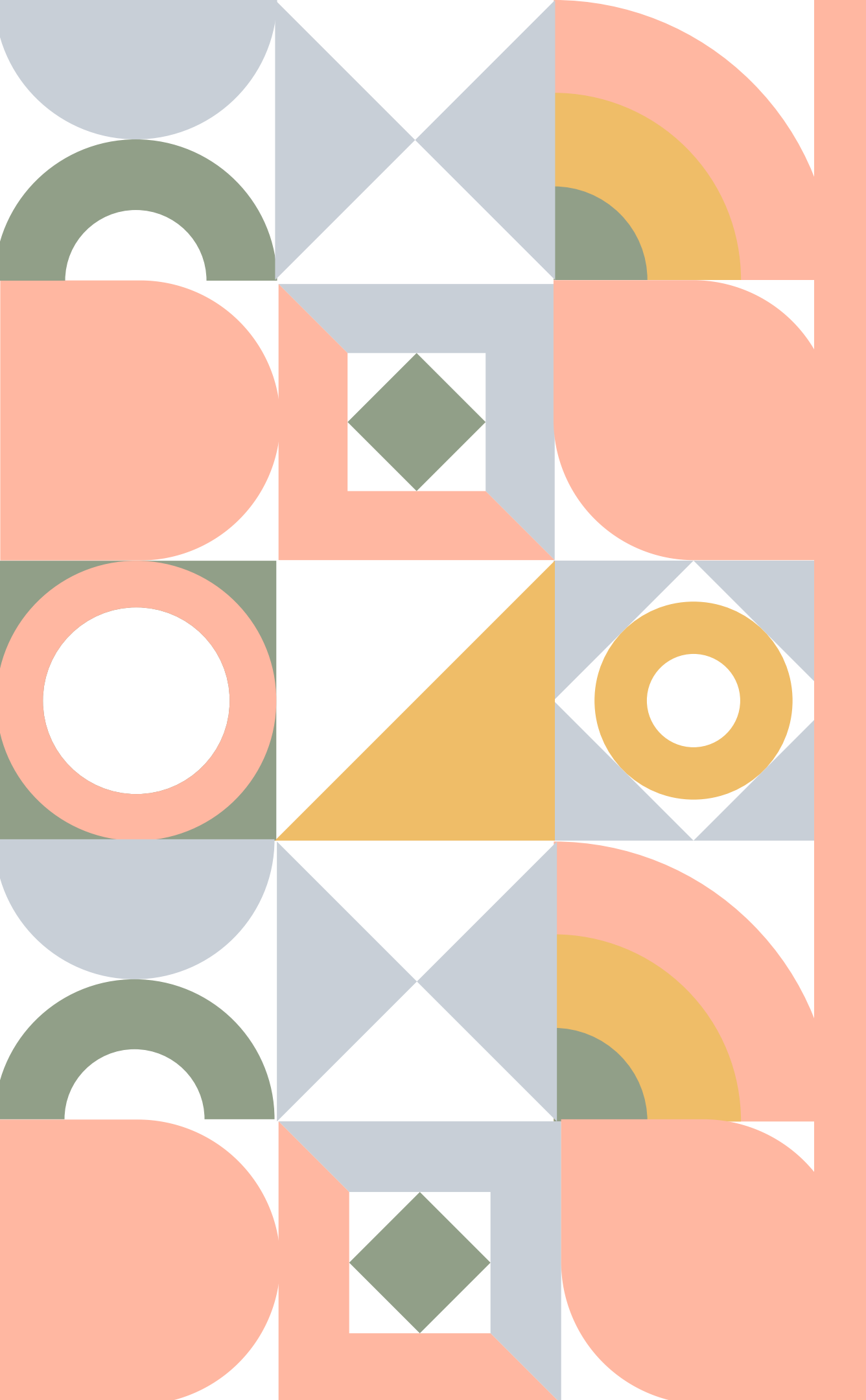
# Want my full classroom systems?

This guide is just the beginning.

Inside my mini course, I walk you through:

- All core classroom systems
- Exactly how to teach them
- How to make your classroom calmer and more independent step by step

👉 Learn more at:



You've got this. And you don't have to do it the  
hard way.

— Deanna

The Thriving Classroom