

Movement Break

Energising Exercises — Too Much Listening? Let's Move a Little!

After a period of focused listening and sitting, the brain and body both benefit from a short break. These three exercises take only a few minutes and are designed to gently re-energise participants, release physical tension, and help everyone return to the session feeling more present and grounded.

All exercises can be done standing or seated — participants choose what feels right for them. There is no right or wrong way to move, and no one needs to perform for others. The facilitator leads by example, doing the exercises alongside the group.

Facilitator overview

Total duration: 5–7 minutes

Position: Standing or seated — participant's choice for each exercise

Music: Optional — calm, upbeat background music can help, but is not required

Tone: Warm, playful, and pressure-free. Invite rather than instruct. Smile.

Exercise 1 — Squeeze the Lemons

 ~2 minutes

 Standing or seated — works either way

How to do it:

1. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Take one slow breath in through your nose.
2. Imagine you are holding a large, juicy lemon in each hand.
3. Slowly squeeze both fists as tightly as you can — really wring out all the juice. Hold the squeeze for 3–4 seconds.
4. Then release completely, opening your hands wide and letting your fingers spread apart. Feel the difference.
5. Shake your hands out loosely, like you are flicking water off your fingertips.
6. Repeat 3–4 times. With each release, imagine you are also letting go of any tension you have been carrying.
7. On the final release, take a slow breath out and let your shoulders drop.

ND Comfort Note

This exercise is particularly helpful for participants who experience physical tension from stress or anxiety, or who find it difficult to 'arrive' in a new activity. The squeezing and releasing activates the nervous system gently and gives the hands something

concrete to do — grounding for many neurodivergent participants. It can be done almost invisibly if a participant feels self-conscious.

Exercise 2 — Reach and Stretch

 ~2 minutes



Standing or seated — the stretch works in both positions

How to do it:

8. Start with both arms relaxed at your sides (or resting on your thighs if seated).
9. Slowly raise your right arm straight up above your head, palm facing inward.
10. As you reach the top, gently rotate your palm so it faces outward — away from your body. Feel the stretch travel from your fingertips all the way down through your shoulder and side.
11. Hold for 2–3 seconds, breathing into the stretch.
12. Lower your right arm slowly while raising your left arm the same way, rotating the palm at the top. The two arms pass each other like slow wings.
13. Keep the movement fluid and unhurried — this is not a race. Let each arm reach a little further with each repetition.
14. Repeat 4–5 times on each side, alternating. End with both arms down and a slow breath out.



ND Comfort Note

Participants who feel uncomfortable standing in front of others can do this exercise seated and with smaller movements — even a subtle raise and rotation of each arm provides the same stretching benefit. Remind the group that the goal is simply to move, not to look a particular way. If anyone has shoulder discomfort, they can adapt the height of the movement freely.

Exercise 3 — Shake It Out

 ~1–2 minutes



Ideally standing, but gentle version possible seated

How to do it:

15. Stand with your feet about hip-width apart (or sit comfortably with feet flat on the floor).
16. Start by shaking out just your hands — loose, floppy, like wet noodles.
17. Let the shaking travel up your wrists, then your forearms, then your whole arms.
18. Now add your shoulders — let them wobble and roll a little.

19. If you are standing and feel comfortable, let the shake move into your torso, hips, and legs.
20. If it feels right, add a small, gentle bounce on the balls of your feet — just a light up-and-down movement, nothing dramatic.
21. Do this for about 30–45 seconds, shaking freely in whatever way feels natural for your body.
22. To finish: stop the movement, stand or sit quietly for a moment, take one deep breath in — and a long breath out.



ND Comfort Note

For participants who feel self-conscious or find spontaneous movement overwhelming, a seated version — shaking only hands and arms, with feet quietly tapping on the floor — is a completely valid alternative. If the room has a mixed sensory profile, avoid loud music for this one; the sound of movement itself is stimulating enough. Some participants may prefer to simply watch — that is also fine.

Returning to the session

After the movement break, give participants 30–60 seconds to settle before moving on. You might say something like: *"Take a moment to notice how your body feels right now — maybe a little lighter, a little more awake. When you're ready, bring your attention back to the room and we'll continue."*

The transition back should be gentle. Do not rush straight into new content — a brief pause after movement helps participants consolidate the reset and arrive fully in the next activity.



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