

Appendix D. Ideas for Physical Activity Breaks in Meetings

Ideas for Physical Activity Breaks in Meetings

*Benjamin Franklin once said,
“You don’t stop playing
because you grow old,
you grow old because
you stop playing.”*

The following are sample ideas for physical activity breaks. Some of them are taken directly from improvisational theater exercises. Activities are limited only by your own creativity (and safety concerns). Mix and match motions with movement ideas or come up with your own. There is no right or wrong way to have physical activity breaks; however, you should be aware of the needs of persons with disabilities. For example, you can ask folks

to “stand up or roll back” to begin an activity. Share your ideas, be willing to pretend you are visiting a kindergarten class, and have fun!

Potential Motions

balance	chew	go	pinch	rotate	skip	tap
bend	clap	hit	pirouette	ride	slide	throw
blow	climb	hop	poke	run	slip	turn
bounce	clog	jump	pop	sashay	slither	walk
brush	cycle	kick	press	serve	spin	wave
build	dance	levitate	pull	shuffle	swagger	wiggle
bump	float	lift	push	skate	swim	wipe
catch	fix	paint	roll	ski	swing	write

Movement Ideas

Can you:

- ... pounce like a tiger
- ... balance on a high wire
- ... climb a rope
- ... swagger like a cowboy
- ... swim the butterfly
- ... clog like you’re on stage
- ... paint the fence
- ... wax the car
- ... shuffle like you just got out of bed
- ... float in the waves at the beach
- ... balance a ball like a seal
- ... wiggle like an inch worm
- ... push the donkey up the hill
- ... shuffle like you just got out of bed
- ... stretch like you’re a giraffe

Can you pretend you’re an elephant

- ... a cat
- ... a snake
- ... a bull frog

Can you be

- ... a lumberjack
- ... a fireman

Can you pretend you are

- ... a ball
- ... a flower

Can you give 4 people high five

Can you giggle like it’s your birthday

Can you sit down like it’s time for school



Moving More Break Suggestions

Adaptations

Adaptations can be made to the moving more activities. If participants cannot stand up, they can do the activities while seated. Before every moving more break, remind participants to move only in ways they feel comfortable. If something does not feel comfortable, they should not do it. Encourage them to do a movement that feels good in place of the one that feels uncomfortable.

1. UPPER BODY STRETCH

Sit up tall in your chair, or stand up. Stretch your arms overhead and lace your fingers together, turn the palms to the ceiling. Breathe out and stretch to the right. Take a deep breath in and come up to the center. Breathe out and stretch to the left. Place your arms back at your side. Take a deep breath in and lift your shoulders up to your ears. Breathe out and let shoulders drop. Repeat 3 times.

Put your hands behind your lower back and lace your fingers together, stretch your shoulders back, open your chest, keep your head in the center and look straight ahead. Relax.

2. NAME THE HEALTHY CHOICES AT YOUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT

Find a partner. Walk around the room sharing with your partner the name of your favorite restaurant and as many healthy choices from the menu as you can think of.

Do this for about one minute. Now switch so that your partner can share about his or her favorite restaurants. Be sure to keep moving the entire time.

Leader Note: You can change the topic of discussion to match the information presented in the lesson being taught. For example, participants can recite favorite scriptures, quotes, or inspirational passages from the week's lesson.

3. NECK AND SHOULDER RELAXER

Turn your head to look over your right shoulder. Run chin down and across the chest to look over your left shoulder and return along the same path. Turn to the left and repeat on the other side. Slowly roll both shoulders backwards in large circles. Do four full circles. Place your hands on your shoulders and make large circles backwards with the elbows. Do four full circles.

4. SHOULDER AND ARM STRETCHES

With your arms at your side, gently shrug your shoulders. Hold them up for the count of 15, then release them slowly. Now bend your elbows and gently press your shoulder blades together for the count of 15. Next, with your thumbs near your armpits, slowly lift and lower your elbow making "chicken wings" 15 times. Try not to raise your shoulders while you do this. With one arm held straight out in front of you, flex your hand like a policeman signaling "stop." Alternate arms ten times. You will feel each shoulder blade move. Now hold both arms straight out in front of you. Make circles with both wrists for a count of ten. Now wave to the person on your right and wave to the person on your left.

5. NECK STRETCHES AND SHOULDER ROLLS

Lean your head to the right to give your neck a good stretch. Hold this for a count of 15. Now bring your head back to center. Now lean to your head to the left and give your neck a good stretch the other direction. Hold this for a count of 15. Repeat, then bring your head back to the center.

Now point your eyes upward, then to the right, then down, then to the left (as if looking at the 12, 3, 6, and 9 positions on a clock). Make these slow stretches for each direction. Now left for a count of 15, now down for 15 and finally right for 15.

Shrug your shoulders toward your ears. Hold for a count of 5. Release. Repeat two more times. Roll your shoulders forward for a count of 15 and now roll your shoulders back for a count of 15.

6. LOWER BODY IN MOTION

Sit up tall in your chair, feet flat on the floor. Keep seated, lift your heels off the floor then put them back down. Repeat 5 times. Lift your right leg out straight in front of you, slowly point your foot (toes toward the ground) and hold for 10-15 seconds, and flex your foot (toes toward the ceiling) and hold for 10-15 seconds. Rotate the ankle in a circle to the right, repeat several times, then rotate the ankle to the left several time. Put the right foot on the floor, lift the left leg and repeat.

7. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITY?

Start by acting out a physical activity you enjoy, like swimming. Act like you are swimming while saying, "I enjoy swimming." The whole group also acts like they are swimming. Then call on a participant, "Mary, what physical activity do you enjoy?" and Mary replies by saying and acting out her favorite activity. For example, "My favorite activity is canoeing," and she acts as if she is canoeing. The whole group acts as if they are canoeing. Everyone should continue with the current activity until the next activity is called out, then they switch to the new activity. This continues until all the participants have had a chance to share an activity. If you have a small group, you may want to go around the group two times. Encourage the group to be creative and have fun!

8. TORSO TWIST

Sit up tall, hands on your thighs. Take a deep breath in and exhale. Slowly turn your body to the right, placing your right hand on your hip and your left hand on the side of your thigh. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Slowly turn back to front. Lift your arms up in front, straight ahead of you, bring your finger tips together, gently push forward through your shoulder blades. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Bring your arms back down. Take a deep breath in and exhale. Slowly turn to the left side, placing your left hand on your hip and your right hand on the outside of your thigh. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Turn back to the front. Lift your arms up in front, straight ahead of you, bringing your finger tips together, gently push forward through your shoulder blades. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Bring your arms back down. Take a deep breath in, exhale.

9. NAME GAME

Ask each person to think of an action that starts with the same letter as his or her name, such as "Jumping James." The person does the action and calls out his or her action-name. Everyone then repeats the action and the action-name. Continue until everyone has a chance to say his or her name. You can go around again and make it faster, if you choose. For participants who say, "I can't think of anything," say "Keep thinking, we'll come back to you." If they still don't come up with anything, ask the group to help.

(From <http://wilderdom.com/games/descriptions/NamePantomime.html>)

10. DANCE FEVER

Call out a type of dance or dance move and the participants do the move. Perform each dance move for 1-3 minutes before calling out the next one. Below are some examples:

- The Swim
- The Hand Jive
- The Twist
- Staying Alive

Ask the participants to call out favorite dance while everyone acts it out. If participants cannot stand, all of the moves can be done seated.

11. MOVIN' ALL AROUND

Perform each of these activities for approximately one minute. The order of the activities may be varied. After you go through each of the activities, ask the participants which movement was their favorite and repeat it and/or ask them which one they would like to finish with.

- March in place.
- Alternate heel taps. Alternate heel taps by moving the right foot in front of your body and placing the heel of the right foot on the ground. Bring the right foot back and move the left foot forward. At the same time, alternate bending arms at the elbow, like you are doing biceps curls. When the left leg is out, the right arm will be curled up, when the right leg is out, the left arm will be curled up.
- Step side to side. Bend arms at the elbow (starting position for a lateral raise for shoulder) as you step one leg out to the side, bring arms up to shoulder level (as if you were doing a lateral raise for shoulders), as you bring your feet together, bring your arms back close to your body (starting position for a lateral raise for shoulder).

Leader Note: The leg movements can be done while seated. Using arms is optional. Participants can either place their hands on their hips or do what is natural to them. If they use their arms, they will feel their heart rate increase more. If they place their hands on their hips, their heart rate will not increase as much as it would if they were using their arms.

12. DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

Bring in music for popular group dance song and let the group dance. Below are some suggestions. Use any fun song the group might enjoy. If appropriate for your faith community, bring religious or spiritual music for this activity. You can ask participants to provide their favorite hymns, worship music, or religious songs for this activity.

- Macarena
- The Twist
- Electric Slide
- Boot Scootin' Boogie
- YMCA
- Achy Breaky Heart
- Twist and Shout

13. BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Pretend to pass out several imaginary beach balls. "Hand" them out to folks to get them started. Have participants pretend to hit them around the room. Encourage participants to "hit" the balls in a variety of ways. For example, they can hit them with one hand, with two hands, spike, get down low, to the side, the front, etc. Encourage participants to have fun!

Leader Note: You can use other imaginary games such as soccer, basketball or tennis.

14. MR. ED'S SCHOOL OF COUNTING

Each hand clap counts as 1. Each foot stomp (or knee slap) counts as 10. Can you count to 4? Can you count to 32? What is 5×7 ? What is $144 \div 12$? Great job, give yourself 4!

You can also incorporate information from the lessons—how many minutes of physical activity do adults need for good health? How many minutes of physical activity do children need?

15. TAKE A WALK

Lead participants on a 10-15 minute walk. Choose a safe, accessible location inside the building, outside around the building or in a surrounding neighborhood. Instruct participants to wear comfortable shoes, walk at their own pace and only go as far as they feel comfortable. Make sure everyone knows the route and allow for different paces. If walking outside and participants will not be in view of each other, create “walking buddies,” so that no one is walking alone.

Leader Note: Before leading the group on a walk outdoors, evaluate the safety and accessibility of a potential walking route by using a walkability checklist. Checklists can be found on the Eat Smart Move More North Carolina Web site, www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com. If possible, carry a cell phone with you in case of an emergency.

