



**Headway Preston**  
**Gentle Exercise Session 1**  
**by Catherine Mitchell**



the brain injury association  
preston and chorley

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**Welcome to my gentle exercise session 1**

You can find the video to guide you through this sessions at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHHwkEbAUPm5Gce5aZqT7Xw/>

The number of repetitions for each exercise is just suggested. Please only do as many repetitions as feels comfortable for you. Always stop and rest if you feel any discomfort and take into account any medical advice you have received with regard to exercising. Basically - tune into your body, relax and enjoy!

Sit comfortably in a chair so that your feet are relaxed into the floor, hip-width apart with your ankles under your knees. Ideally your knees should be just slightly lower than your hips. Feel that you are sharing your weight equally on your right and left sitting bones and that your pelvis is level so that your spine can lengthen up out of your pelvis. Keep lengthening up through the top of your spine, which is about level with your ears. This ensures that the back of your neck is nice and long and your head can balance on the top of your spine taking the strain off your neck muscles. This posture also helps you to breathe more efficiently and feel more energised.

1. Pressing down through the balls of the feet and bases of the little toes, lift your heels. Roll through your feet to lift your toes. This mobilises your feet and ankles. It can also help you to feel grounded and more relaxed. Pay attention to the changing sensations on the soles of your feet as you peel them as if the floor is sticky.

**Do this 6-10 times.**

2. Shoulder rolls bringing your shoulders forwards, up towards your ears, back and then relax them down. Enjoy the feeling of your shoulders relaxing and your chest opening as you complete this movement. You could take a breath in as your shoulders come up and breathe out as they relax back and down, to help you to let go of tension and enjoy this feeling of release.

**Do this 6-10 times.**

3. Starting with the hands on the knees, slide one hand up your thigh towards your hip causing your ribcage to rotate a little to that side. Then slide that hand back down towards your knee as the other hand slides up your thigh towards your hip, causing your ribcage to rotate the other way. Massaging your thighs in this way can be quite calming and comforting. This exercise also mobilises your thoracic spine - the part of your spine where the ribcage is. Only rotate as far as is comfortable for you. Take care not to force the twist if you have osteoporosis - just be gentle with the movement. If it feels ok then think of turning your ribcage, then your shoulders, then your head to rotate further. You could breathe in as you rotate and out as you come through the centre, or just breathe subconsciously if that feels strange or strained.

**Do this 6-10 times each way.**

4. Sit far forwards enough in the chair that you feel safe and secure but that you can hinge forwards from your hips as if you were preparing to stand up. Keep your spine long and make the bend at your hips; not at your waist.

**Do this about 5/6 times.**

Then you could adjust the position of your feet taking them slightly further back, but make sure that your knees don't go beyond your toes as you hinge forward from your hips. If that feels ok, you could hinge forward with your hands on your thighs and press down through your feet to feel your thigh muscles switch on as if you were preparing to stand. Notice that you don't take tension in your neck or shoulders as you do this.

**Do this 6-10 times.**

5. Place your ankles back under your knees. Tense your bottom muscles at the same time as clenching your hands, then relax your bottom muscles and hands completely. You could breathe in as you tense and breathe out as you relax.

**Do this 6-10 times.**

6. Circle your hands round from your wrists.

**Do this 6-10 times each way.**

7. With a 90-degree bend at your elbows, tuck your upper arms in against the sides of your body and keep them there throughout the exercise. With palms facing upwards and upper arms tucked in, open the lower arms and hands out to the sides as far as you can without straining. If you have ever had a rotator cuff injury, this won't be very far but just do what you can without pain. You could breathe in as you open and out as you bring the hands back in front.

**Do this 6-10 times.**

8. Position your feet to come up to stand, hinge forward from your hips and press down through your feet. Actually come up to stand if this is possible/comfortable for you. You could use your arms to assist if necessary by pushing down with your hands as you push up with your legs.

9. If you are standing, take your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart so you feel nice and stable, and soften your knees. Feel that the base of your spine is naturally lengthening down with gravity as the top of your spine lengthens up. Imagine that you are holding a ball with one hand on top and the other underneath. Hold your imaginary ball level with your abdomen so that your shoulders can relax. Practise turning your ball so that you alternate which hand is on top and which one is underneath. Try to focus on the shape and size of the ball. You could imagine it is made of light if you like, and imagine what colour this light is. You could also imagine this light has a particular nature if you like. For example, you could imagine its nature is positive energy, healing light, loving energy, or whatever is meaningful for you. Carry the ball to one side, and turn it in your hands once it gets there. Carry it to the other side and turn it once it gets there. Allow a slight turn to come from your waist and your weight to naturally shift a little from side to side if you are standing.

**After about 6-10 repetitions each way,** bring the ball back to your centre. Then, if you wish, you could take a moment to think of the people/animals to whom you would like to give this positivity/healing/blessing. Then, letting go of the ball, imagine the light mixes into empty space and reaches the people/animals who you are holding in your thoughts.

10. Just to finish, centre yourself with 3 deep breaths. If you have felt a little calmer through doing these exercises, try to remember that calmness is your natural state when you let go of tension. Tuning into the body and the breath helps us to connect with the here and now, which helps us to let go of physical tension and reduce the busyness of the mind. We can try and do that throughout the day/night when we notice our bodies and minds becoming tense.