



Headway Preston
Gentle Exercise Session 2
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the brain injury association
preston and chorley

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Welcome to my gentle exercise session 2

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

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

The number of repetitions 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. Having lengthened up through the top of your spine, drawing your chin slightly back and down, gently turn your head from side to side within a pain-free range of movement. Notice how your head feels balanced on the top of your spine allowing your jaw, neck and shoulders to let go of tension.

Do this 4 or 5 times each way.

2. Imagine that you have a thread coming from the crown of your head lifting you upwards as your sitting bones stay firmly in contact with the chair. With your hands on your knees, feel as if the thread is lifting you up and forwards so that you hinge forward from your hips, keeping your spine long and bending your elbows. Try not to bend at all at the waist. Now feel that you are being lifted up and backwards so that you hinge back from your hips, keeping your spine long and straightening your elbows. **Go forward and back 4 or 5 times.**

You may feel your core muscles switching on like a girdle round your middle as they work to keep your spine long as if you have a pole against it. Now take your hands onto your hips and feel that you are being lifted up and slightly over to one side, keeping the sides of your body long.

Go side to side 4 or 5 times.

Now imagine that the thread is being pulled up and circled round so that you go forward, to the side, back and to the other side in a smooth circular motion. Keep your spine long and go 4 or 5 times round one way and repeat the same number round the other way. Keep the movement quite slow and controlled. **Stop if you feel dizzy.**

3. Sit far forwards enough in the chair that you feel safe and secure but that you can hinge forwards from your hips and push down through your feet as if you were preparing to stand up. You may need to adjust the position of your feet for this, taking them slightly further back but making sure that your knees don't go beyond your toes as you hinge forward. You could place your hands on your thighs to feel your thigh muscles engage as you push through your feet. Try not to take tension in your neck or shoulders, and try not to let your knees collapse in against each other - keep them hip-width apart.

Do this 6-10 times. On your last one you could push all the way up to stay standing for the next few exercises. These can also be done seated.

4. If you are standing, position yourself so that you can stand up to your full height with your feet hip-width apart and hold onto the back of your chair with your shoulders relaxed. If you are seated, re-position your feet so that your ankles are directly under your knees. Roll through your feet to lift your heels and toes alternately.

Do this 6-10 times. If you are standing, try not to let your hips go back as you lift your toes. Keeping your bottom in and your spine upright as much as you can will help to recruit the muscles up the fronts of your shins and thighs.

5. If you are standing, take your feet a little wider apart than your shoulders. Bend one knee a little to shift your weight to that side. Shift from side to side in this way, bending one knee as the other straightens. At the same time you could do alternate shoulder rolls, just relaxing into the movement and rolling the shoulder backwards as you shift your weight over to that side.

If you are seated, you could do the shoulder roll with a little sway that way.

Do 6-8 each way.

Now change the direction of the shoulder rolls; roll alternate shoulders forwards the same number of times. You may find that you are now rolling the opposite shoulder to the knee that is bending, but there is no right or wrong way of doing this - just allow your body to move naturally. If you are seated, notice how your spine naturally rotates or bends from side to side.

6. a) If you are standing, keep your feet hip-width apart but place one foot forward so that you can rock forward and back a little, rolling through your feet to lift your back heel as you rock forward and your front toes as you rock back. This may test your balance. You could either hold onto the chair or co-ordinate a breaststroke arm movement with the rock forward and back, starting the stroke as you rock forward and completing it as you rock back.

If you are seated, you could lift the heels as you reach forward to start the stroke and complete it with the push back as you lift your toes. You could also take a hinge forward and back from your hips to add an extra challenge for your core muscles. Whether standing or seated, you could imagine the resistance of the water to put more energy into the movement.

Do 6-8 breaststrokes/rocks forward and back with that foot forward.

6. b) Before you repeat with the other foot forward, take the feet slightly wider apart than your shoulders to circle your hips round **6-8 times each way**. Keep your knees soft and imagine that you are skimming the inside of a hula hoop with your hips. If you are seated, you could repeat exercise 2. at this point.

6. c) **Repeat 6-8 breaststrokes/rocks forward and back with the other foot forward.**

7. a) This exercise will test your balance a little more. Hold onto the chair. Place the heel of one foot directly in front of the toes of the other as if you are standing on a tightrope. Share your weight equally on both feet. Whichever foot is in front, take that hand onto your shoulder so you can make elbow circles with that arm. Keep holding onto the chair with the other hand. Take the elbow forward, up, back and down within a pain-free range of movement. If you feel quite steady, you could add a rotation from your waist as the elbow circles round.

7. a) continued: For even more of a challenge, you could look round towards your elbow as it circles back. If you are very steady, you could try holding onto the chair more lightly or even letting go and placing that hand on your hip.

Do 5 or 6 elbow circles that way then reverse the direction of the circles.

If you are seated, do the elbow circles with or without the rotation from your waist and the turn of your head.

7. b) Before you repeat with the other foot in front, take your feet hip-width apart and gently tilt your head from side to side to let go of any tension. This is a small movement. Make sure you start off with the head in good alignment so there is length through the back of the neck with the chin slightly lower than the base of the skull. Hold onto the chair if you need to.

Do this 4 or 5 times each way.

7. c) Repeat 7. a) with the other foot in front and the other elbow circling round. Try and do the same number of repetitions on this side as you did on the other.

8. Take your feet hip-width apart and soften your knees. Start off with the head tilt that you did before then allow your shoulders to tip as well. If that feels ok, keep going into the side bend so that you bend at your waist. If you are seated, you could slide your hands down the front legs of your chair. If you are standing, you could slide your hands down the seams of your trousers. Whether seated or standing, try and go directly to the side as if you are in between two panes of glass. You could use your breath, breathing out as you bend to the side and in as you rebuild your spine. You could visualise your spine, starting the movement from the top of your spine and working down it into the flexion and then re-stacking one bone back on top of the other to extend it.

Do 6-8 bends each way.

9. **Finish with 3 deep breaths to centre yourself.** 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.