

## Warm-Up

[You may want to put on music in the background, but ensure this will not prevent any of the dancers from hearing you properly. If you are working with new dancers, the warm-up will also provide you with feedback about their current abilities, remembering that most wheelchair users lack opportunities to move freely around in their daily lives because environments are so cramped.]

### **Part 1 (this can also be used as a daily warm-up at home)**

**Know your limits and take responsibility for your own bodies: don't do anything that hurts you.**

**Come into a circle, not too close together.** If you have a support worker or carer with you who knows you well, they can help with any movements that you find difficult, but volunteers, and support workers who are not familiar with your body, should not assist.

**Think about your feet.** If possible, try to keep them spaced apart flat on your footrests, with your toes pointing forward. Even if you have no sensation or movement in your legs, this will still help with your core strength and balance.

**Close your eyes, and start to breathe deeply.** Breathe in through your nose, hold the breath for a moment and then blow it out through your mouth. Try to breathe out for twice as long as you breathe in — in your head, try counting one, two, three as you breathe in, hold for four, and then breathe out five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

**As you breathe, become aware of the space around you and of the other members of the team.** Breathe in the energy from all around you, and as you breathe out, keep the energy inside you and send it into the furthest parts of your body — your hands, your feet, your fingers, your toes. Feel the energy entering every part of you and waking you up.

**As you continue to breathe, feel your head become lighter and float up towards the ceiling.** Imagine an invisible puppet string is holding your head up, without you needing to strain at all.

**Keep breathing as you open your eyes.** Now be aware of how you are sitting. Your lower back should be up against the backrest. Move your weight slightly from one side to the other and back again.

**If you need to adjust position,** try putting your lower arms on your armrests and rocking forward onto them — this will take the weight off your bottom and allow you to move it without having to push upwards. If you can't move your body, be aware of your weight where it meets your cushion.

**Let your chin become heavy now,** and let it drop down to your chest just as far as is comfortable. If you can't move your head, just be aware of the weight of your chin.

**Now let your chin become light** and float slowly up as far as it can towards the ceiling, letting your head go back. If you can't move your head, be aware of the weight at the back of it.

**Let your chin become heavy and drop down again....**and then let your chin become light and float up again.

**Now bring your head down to its usual position,** remembering the puppet string that is still holding it up from the ceiling.

**Look slowly round to your right as far as you can.** If you can't move your head, just use your eyes.

**Bring your head slowly back to centre,** and then look round to your left and back. Now look slowly to the right and left again.

**Now let's wake up your face.** Let's start with some yawns. Now close your eyes and screw your face up as tightly as possible, and then relax. Open your mouth as widely as possible, and then close it loosely and push your lips out. Try that again...

**Now bring your fingers to your face if you can, and give it a good massage.** You can do this by rubbing in small circles, or by using your finger tips to tap your face. If your sinuses are blocked, tapping on your forehead and the sides of your nose will help to drain them.

**Now become aware of your shoulders.** Let them float up towards your ears, and then slowly sink again. If you can't move them, focus on relaxing your shoulder muscles. Let's repeat that...

**Make tiny circles with your shoulders**, rolling them back, then up, then forward and back to your starting position. Keep going, making the circles bigger and bigger. If you can't move them, then imagining the movement will still help to relax the muscles.

**Now go the other way.** Roll your shoulders forward, then up, then back and return to your starting position. As before, keep making the circles bigger and bigger.

**We're going to repeat this using our elbows to lead and letting our shoulders follow.** Take your elbows slowly back, then up, then forward, and then return to your starting position. Keep going, making the circles bigger and bigger.

**Now go the other way.** Take your elbows slowly forward, then up, then back, and then return to your starting position. Keep going, making the circles bigger and bigger.

**Let your arms fall down on either side of your wheelchair**, and feel their weight as you remember to keep breathing. Now let your hands go floppy and try to shake them off your wrists.

## **Part 2**

### **Time to move!**

**The first thing I want you to do is to go to as many different parts of the room as possible**, exploring every part of the space. Always be conscious of the other dancers, and try to move around each other rather than one dancer stopping to let another go past.

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**Now, when you go past another dancer, acknowledge them with a smile or a nod.**

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**Now, when you meet and greet another dancer, find a way of moving together in the space** before you part and go on to meet someone else. Perhaps roll forwards or backwards together, or turn around each other.

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**Now we're going to add in changes of speed.** Carry on as before, acknowledging the other dancers and moving with them before you pass. Speed up when I say 'Fast'; slow down again when I say 'Slow'; and when I say 'Stop' stop your chair as quickly as you can. [It may be helpful to use a tambour or drum too so that everyone can hear]

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**Now it's time to play 'Follow my leader'.** When I call out a name, you need to find that dancer as quickly as possible and follow them around the space. You might want to form a conga line behind them; just see what happens naturally. As soon as I call out the next name, they should take the lead and you should follow them again. Try to get as close to the person in front of you as you can.

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**Now we're going to form lines of three or four dancers across the top of the room.** Wheelchairs come in different sizes, so you are aiming to line up with each other's shoulders. When I say 'go', each line will move together in their own time to the other end of the room. Slow down or speed up as necessary to keep in a line.

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**Now we're going to do the same thing going backwards.** Don't worry, I will tell you before you reach the back wall.

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**And now it's time for the first dance.**