



Movement for Balance

1. Welcome & Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)

Facilitator opening:

"Today we're talking about movement—not exercise we have to do, but movement we enjoy or would like to enjoy. Living with a vestibular disorder can make movement feel intimidating, frustrating, or even scary. But movement can also be an empowering and meaningful part of reclaiming confidence."

Ground rules:

- Share only what you're comfortable sharing
- Everyone's vestibular experience is different
- What works for one person may not work for another
- Safety first—this is about encouragement, not pushing through unsafe symptoms
- Listen with empathy and curiosity

Icebreaker (quick round):

"Share your name and one movement or activity you used to enjoy—or wish you could enjoy more."

2. Opening Discussion: Movement & Vestibular Challenges (10 minutes)

Discussion prompts:

- How has your vestibular condition changed your relationship with movement?
- Do you avoid certain activities because they trigger symptoms?
- What emotions come up when you think about moving more? Fear? Frustration? Hope?
- Has anyone felt nervous about falling, getting dizzy, or being embarrassed in public?

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Facilitator note:

Normalize fear of movement. Many vestibular patients develop movement avoidance, which can reduce confidence and conditioning over time.

Possible transition:

"Fear is a very real part of this experience—but many people find ways to adapt movement, so it feels safer and more manageable."

3. Main Discussion: Favorite Ways to Move (20-25 minutes)

Introduce examples:

- Dance
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Pilates
- Walking
- Hiking/nature walks
- Bicycling
- Swimming / water movement
- Golf
- Stretching
- Gardening
- Chair exercise
- Recreational sports
- Other hobbies involving movement

Discussion prompts:

- What type of movement feels best for you?
- What do you enjoy about it?
- How do you make it work with your symptoms?
- Have you modified how you participate?
- Do you do it alone, with a partner, in a class, or online?
- Has anyone discovered a new form of movement after developing vestibular symptoms?

Specific prompts if conversation needs momentum:

- "Has anyone tried yoga or tai chi for balance and body awareness?"
- "Does anyone enjoy being outdoors—walking, gardening, hiking?"

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L I F E R E B A L A N C E D

- “Has anyone found movement through music or dance?”
- “What about seated movement or gentle stretching?”

4. Practical Strategies: Making Movement Safer & More Accessible (10-15 minutes)

Prompt discussion around adaptations:

Starting Small

- Did anyone begin with very small movements?
- Seated exercises?
- Holding onto a chair or countertop?
- Short sessions rather than longer workouts?

Balance & Mobility Supports

- Cane
- Walking poles
- Walker
- Holding a railing
- Bringing a support person

Ask:

“What tools or strategies help you feel safer?”

At home / virtual options

- YouTube movement videos
- AARP online exercise programs
- Firebush Fit-to-Dance
- Chair yoga
- Virtual tai chi

Ask:

“Does anyone prefer moving at home where the environment feels more predictable?”

In-person movement

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- Gym
- Pool
- Community center
- Walking group
- Fitness class

Ask:

“What helps make public spaces easier?”

Examples:

- Going during quieter hours
- Choosing familiar spaces
- Bringing a friend

Comfort & Safety Reminders

Discussion prompt:

“What practical details make movement easier?”

Examples:

- Supportive shoes with rubber soles
- Avoid slip-on shoes if balance is unpredictable
- Comfortable clothing
- Hydration
- Sunscreen if outdoors
- Sunglasses/hat for visual sensitivity
- Quiet music vs stimulating environments
- Rest breaks as needed

5. Benefits & Motivation (10 minutes)

Discussion prompts:

- What benefits have you noticed from moving regularly?
- Has movement improved your confidence?
- Strength?
- Balance?
- Mood?
- Fatigue?

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- Sleep?
- Sense of independence?

Facilitator talking point:

“Movement doesn’t have to look intense to be meaningful. Building strength, flexibility, stamina, and confidence can all support better balance and function.”

Prompt:

“How do you stay motivated when symptoms make consistency difficult?”

Suggestions to surface:

- Building routines
- Scheduling movement at the same time each day
- Accountability partner
- Tracking progress
- Celebrating small wins
- Focusing on enjoyment instead of performance

6. Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Round-robin closing prompt (choose one):

- “What’s one movement you’d like to try or return to?”
- “What’s one helpful idea you heard today?”
- “What encouragement would you offer someone afraid to move?”

Facilitator close:

“Movement with a vestibular disorder may look different than it once did—and that’s okay. Progress is not about doing it perfectly. It’s about finding safe, meaningful ways to keep moving in a body that deserves care and patience.”

Optional Takeaway Challenge

Invite participants to:

Try 5-10 minutes of enjoyable movement this week, adapted to their comfort and safety level, and notice how it feels.

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