

## Gentle Stretching

 60 minutes

### Objective

- *The purpose of this tool is to introduce gentle stretching as a form of physical rest, emphasizing its benefits for youth (and the benefit for all). It also provides practical exercises to help release tension and enhance flexibility, contributing to overall well-being.*

### Materials needed

- A yoga mat or soft surface for comfort
- Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing
- A quiet space with enough room to stretch comfortably
- Optional: Stretching straps or bands for assistance

### Tool Description

This tool provides a simple guide for participants to incorporate gentle stretching into their daily routine for better physical rest and well-being. Through slow, mindful movements, it helps relieve muscle tension, improve flexibility, and promote relaxation. With easy-to-follow instructions and stretching routines, participants can reduce stress, enhance circulation, and support physical recovery.



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## Instructions

### 1 - INTRODUCTION (20 minutes)

- Introduce the manual
- Allow participants time to familiarise themselves with the manual and its content
- Focus on the chapter **Physical Rest**
- Introduce the importance of **stretching** as a practice and let participants know this will be the main focus of this module

### 2 - Introduce the importance of gentle stretching

- Define gentle stretching as slow, mindful movements that release muscle tension and promote relaxation.
- Let participants know that practicing gentle stretching will be the main focus of this module and how it can be easily integrated into daily routines.



Advise participants to always listen to their body and if they experience any pain to discontinue with that particular stretch



## Instructions

### 3 - Guided Exercise (Step-by-Step)

#### Step 1: Prepare Your Space

- Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can move freely without distractions.
- Lay a yoga mat or use a soft surface for comfort and support.

#### Step 2: Center yourself with breathing

- Sit or stand comfortably with your back straight and shoulders relaxed.
- Inhale deeply through your nose, allowing your lungs to fill with air.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth, releasing any tension in your body.
- Repeat this breathing process for 3–5 breaths, focusing on relaxation and grounding.

#### Step 3: Neck stretch

- Sit or stand up straight with your shoulders relaxed.
- Gently tilt your head toward your right shoulder, feeling a stretch on the left side of your neck.
- Hold the position for 15–30 seconds.
- Slowly return to center and repeat the stretch on the left side.
- Perform the stretch twice on each side.

#### Step 4: Shoulder roll

- Relax your arms by your sides.
- Slowly roll your shoulders forward in a circular motion for 10–15 seconds, then reverse for 10–15 seconds.
- Repeat the cycle twice in each direction.



## Instructions

### 4 - Seated Forward Bend

- Sit on the floor with your legs extended straight in front of you.
- Inhale, raise your arms overhead to lengthen your spine.
- Exhale, hinge forward at your hips, reaching toward your toes.
- Hold the stretch for 15–30 seconds, keeping your back as straight as possible.
- Slowly return to sitting and repeat the stretch twice, holding each time for 15–30 seconds.

### 5 - Cat-Cow Stretch

- Begin on all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and knees under your hips.
- Inhale as you arch your back, lifting your head and tailbone (Cow Pose).
- Exhale, rounding your back and tucking your chin to your chest (Cat Pose).
- Repeat this cycle for 8–10 breaths, moving slowly and mindfully with each breath.

### 6 - Child's Pose

- Kneel on the mat, sitting back on your heels.
- Stretch your arms forward, bringing your forehead to the mat.
- Focus on deep, slow breaths, letting your body relax deeper with each exhale.
- Hold this position for 2–3 minutes, allowing your body to fully relax and release tension.
- Lie down for a few moments, in a comfortable position, on back, side, belly, whatever feels comfortable, and allow the gentle stretching movements to take effect



## Instructions



Only stay in a stretch as long as feels comfortable, if the time recommended doesn't feel comfortable, don't stay in it, listen to your body.

### 7 - Reflection and closure

#### 7.1 Reflection

- Deep Breathing: Invite participants to sit comfortably and take deep breaths to relax and center themselves.
- Guided Reflection: Ask participants to notice how their body feels after the stretches, including any changes in tension or flexibility. Encourage them to reflect on how they feel emotionally—more relaxed or less stressed.
- Group Sharing: Allow participants to share their reflections if they feel comfortable, discussing sensations or observations from the session.

#### 7.2 Discussion of the Information Covered

- Review the key points: the importance of physical rest and the benefits of gentle stretching.
- Discuss how gentle stretching can be incorporated into daily routines for long-term benefits.
- Reinforce how the practice reduces muscle tension, supports recovery, and promotes mental relaxation.

#### 7.3 Closure

- Encourage participants to integrate gentle stretching into their daily routine.
- Suggest a weekly check-in to track progress in flexibility and tension relief.
- Thank participants for their engagement and remind them to revisit the manual for guidance.

## Reflection questions

- How does your mind feel after completing the stretches? Do you feel more relaxed or at ease?
- How does your body feel now compared to before the session?

**Take care of your body.  
It's the only place you have to live.**

- Were there any stretches that felt particularly relieving or challenging?
- Can you identify any areas of your body where tension has released?
- How do you plan to incorporate gentle stretching into your daily routine?



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## Annex 1

**Select a few affirmations to repeat during your exercise:**

- I am focusing on each part of my body, relaxing with each breath.
- As I move slowly, I feel the stretch deeper with every breath.
- I am following my breath, and with each exhale, I feel more relaxed.
- As my muscles relax, my mind becomes calmer.
- It's normal to feel some tension, but I am not experiencing pain.
- I'm becoming more aware of my body and noticing the release of tension.
- I am listening to my body, and I feel more at peace with each movement.
- As I breathe, I let go of the tension and feel lighter.
- I'm strengthening my connection with my body as I move.
- I am opening myself to relaxation, feeling my mind and body come to a place of calm.



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