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## **Gentle Exercises for Support Group Meetings**

By Sharon Squires, RN

Listed below are a few basic, range-of-motion exercises for you to introduce to your support group members during your meetings. Before you begin, remind your membership that these exercises are for general information only. Your primary care physician is the best resource for what you can and cannot do and you should always follow his/her guidelines before undertaking an exercise program of any kind.

The first principle of exercise is to "clear the channels"! Have everyone who can, stand in front of their chairs. If you have the facilities, it often adds a nice touch to your stretching sessions to have some gentle music playing in the background on your portable stereo. Leader: "All right, everyone, please stand up in front of your chairs, if you can. If you cannot, remain seated with good straight back posture. Ready...breathe in through your nose...big deep breathe, making sure you pull your belly-button towards your spine. This helps you breathe from the abdomen rather than shallow chest breathing. Hold your breath, 1.2.3.4.5, and exhale through your nose. And relax. Repeat 3 times. Always be careful not to hyperventilate, because you can make yourself dizzy!"

"Most of us hold our tension in our necks. Let's loosen those tight necks! On the count of three, look to the left. If you don't know the name of the person seated to your left, ask them their name. Now, when I count to three, return, face forward, and introduce the person on your left to everyone. (Starting with the left side of the room, have each member introduce the person on their left, if the size of the audience and time allows) Turning right, repeat the above."

"Now, lets roll those shoulders, forward, and hold, 1.2.3.4.5, and back, 1.2.3.4.5. Repeat 3 times. Let's shrug our shoulders. Ready, begin. (shoulders up to the ears, hold for count of 5, and release. Repeat 3 times) And finally, lets make circles with those shoulders, almost like you were rowing a boat, only keep your elbows in next to your waist. 1.and 2.and 3.and 4.and 5."

"Who, among us, has not complained of mid-scapular pain? I call it the area where I'm sprouting my angel's wings. For a little bit of heaven, turn to the person seated on your right, and with their permission, very gently massage, first the right side, to the count of 10, and then the left side, to the count of 10."

These are just some suggestions; anyone can use and manipulate to suit their own situation. Have fun with it! It's a good way to get your group to interact with one another!