

FREE BONUS • STOP THE CHAOS!

bonus 2

Move to Calm

EXERCISE GUIDE FOR DEMENTIA

Simple 10-minute routines that ease restlessness and agitation and lead to relaxation, with the words to use when they say “no.”

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DR. VERA'S DEMENTIA ACTION MANUALS

WHY MOVEMENT CALMS

A body that moves is a brain that settles.

Much of the pacing, fidgeting and agitation in dementia is restless energy with nowhere to go. Gentle, rhythmic movement gives that energy a safe outlet, and the calm often lasts for hours.

Burns off restlessness

Pacing and fidgeting often drop after a short walk or a few minutes of seated marching.

Rhythm soothes

Repeated, steady movement (rocking, swaying, walking) calms the nervous system.

Better sleep

Daytime activity and daylight help reset the body clock and reduce night waking.

Mood & connection

Moving together, especially to music, lifts mood and builds trust between you.

When to use each routine

ROUTINE	BEST TIME	USE IT WHEN...
1. Seated Calm-Down	Anytime, 10 min	They're restless, fidgety or starting to get upset
2. Steady on Your Feet	Morning or early afternoon	They have energy to burn and can stand with support
3. Evening Wind-Down	3–5 p.m. and before bed	Sundowning hours, or you want a calmer night

DR. VERA'S TIP

The best time to move is before the hard hours. A 10-minute routine at 2:30 p.m. can prevent a 4 p.m. meltdown.

READ THIS FIRST

Safety first

Check with the doctor before starting

Especially if they have heart or lung disease, recent falls, joint replacements, dizziness, or new pain. A physical or occupational therapist can tailor these moves.

Set up for success

- ✓ Sturdy chair with arms, no wheels
- ✓ Non-slip shoes, not socks or slippers
- ✓ Clear the floor of rugs and clutter
- ✓ Water nearby
- ✓ Their favorite music playing

Stop right away if you see

- ✓ Chest pain or pressure
- ✓ Trouble breathing or can't talk
- ✓ Dizziness or unsteadiness
- ✓ New pain or swelling
- ✓ Sudden confusion or paleness

The 4 golden rules

1. Do it with them

Sit facing them and move together. People with dementia copy far better than they follow directions.

2. Show, don't explain

Demonstrate each move. Use one short cue, not a long instruction.

3. Slow and small is fine

Any movement counts. Stop before they get tired or frustrated.

4. End on a win

Finish with something they did well and say "That felt good, thank you."

1 Seated Calm-Down

10 minutes · anyone who can sit in a chair · use whenever restlessness starts



Smell the flower, blow the candle **3 breaths**

Breathe in slowly through the nose, then out slowly through pursed lips. Hold up a real flower or a finger as the 'candle.'

Say: "Let's smell this flower... and blow out the candle."



Shoulder rolls **5 each way**

Roll both shoulders up, back and down in slow circles. Then reverse.

Say: "Let's roll our shoulders back, nice and slow."



Seated marching **30 seconds**

Lift one knee, then the other, like marching in a parade. Add arm swings if they can.

Say: "Let's march to the music!"



Reach for the sky **5 times**

Raise both arms overhead as high as is comfortable, then lower slowly.

Say: "Reach up and grab an apple from the tree."



Gentle seated twist **3 each side**

Sit tall, turn the upper body gently to one side and look over the shoulder, then the other side.

Say: "Let's look behind us... now the other way."



Ankle pumps **10 times**

Point the toes up toward the ceiling, then down to the floor, like pressing a gas pedal.

Say: "Press the gas pedal... and let it go."



Towel squeeze **10 squeezes**

Roll a hand towel and have them squeeze it hard, then let go. Great for hands that pick, grab or fidget.

Say: "Squeeze tight... and let it go."



Finish with 3 slow breaths **3 breaths**

Return to flower-and-candle breathing. Let the shoulders drop.

Say: "Nice and slow. That felt good."

2 Steady on Your Feet

10–20 minutes · for those who can stand with support · morning or early afternoon



Heel raises at the counter **10 times**

Hold the kitchen counter with both hands. Rise up onto the toes, then lower slowly.

Say: "Let's stand up tall on our tiptoes."



Side steps **5 each way**

Holding the counter, step to the side and back, like a slow dance.

Say: "Step to the side... and back home."



Sit-to-stand **5 times**

From a sturdy chair, scoot forward, feet back, nose over toes, and stand. Sit down slowly with hands on the armrests.

Say: "Nose over toes... and up we go."



Wall push-ups **8 times**

Stand an arm's length from a wall, hands on the wall at shoulder height, and bend the elbows slowly.

Say: "Let's push the wall away."



Walk together **5–15 minutes**

Walk side by side, ideally outdoors in daylight. Point out flowers, dogs and houses along the way.

Say: "Come walk with me, I want to show you something."



Purposeful movement **10 minutes**

Fold towels, sweep the porch, water plants or wipe the table. Familiar tasks give movement a purpose.

Say: "Could you help me with these? You're so good at it."

DR. VERA'S TIP

Always stand next to them, on their weaker side, with a hand near their waist. Balance moves are done holding the counter, never in the middle of the room.

3 Evening Wind-Down

10–15 minutes · lights low, TV off · 3–5 p.m. and before bed



Rocking or swaying to music **3–5 minutes**

In a rocking chair, or seated and swaying side to side together, to slow, familiar music.

Say: "Let's sway to this song together."



Hand massage **3 minutes each hand**

With a little lotion, slowly rub the palm, each finger and the back of the hand.

Lavender lotion adds a calming scent.

Say: "Let me give your hands some love."



Squeeze and let go **5 times**

Make tight fists and squeeze for 3 seconds, then let go and shake out the hands. Then shoulders up to the ears... and drop.

Say: "Squeeze... squeeze... and let it all go."



Gentle neck stretch **3 each side**

Slowly tilt the ear toward the shoulder and hold for 5 slow breaths. Never roll the head in full circles.

Say: "Ear to shoulder... nice and easy."



Slow dance or hand-holding sway **1–2 songs**

Stand or sit holding both hands and sway gently to a favorite song from their teens or twenties.

Say: "May I have this dance?"



Belly breathing **5 breaths**

Place their hand on their belly. Breathe in for 4 counts, feeling the belly rise, and out for 6 counts.

Say: "Let's fill up the balloon... and let it out slowly."

DR. VERA'S TIP

Pair the wind-down with the same song every night. Over time the music itself becomes a signal that it's time to relax.

When they say "No"

Never force exercise. A struggle will undo any calming benefit. Instead, change the invitation.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"Do you want to exercise?"	"Come march with me to this song." Invite, don't ask yes or no.
"You need to move more."	"I need your help folding these towels." Give it a purpose.
"Lift your arms like this, then..."	Just start doing it yourself, smiling. Most people will join in.
"Come on, just five more."	"That's perfect. Let's rest." Stop while it still feels good.
"It's time for your exercises."	"Let's go see the flowers outside." Walking with a destination feels natural.

Matching movement to the stage

STAGE	WHAT USUALLY WORKS BEST
Early	Daily walks, all three routines, group classes, gardening, dancing, tai chi or chair yoga classes.
Middle	Routines 1 and 3 with you mirroring each move, short walks with a destination, folding and sorting tasks, music and dancing.
Late	Hand massage, gentle assisted arm and leg movements, rocking, breathing together, and changing position often for comfort.

DR. VERA'S TIP

If they refuse, wait 15 minutes and try again with music playing. A different time, a different song or a different word often changes everything.

My weekly movement plan

Check off each routine and note how the day went. You'll start to see which moves bring the calmest afternoons and nights.

ROUTINE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1. Seated Calm-Down	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Steady on Your Feet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Evening Wind-Down	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Walk outside	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music & dancing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mood today (😊 😐 😞)							
Sleep last night							

Notes: what worked, what didn't

This guide is for education only and is not medical advice. Always check with the person's doctor or pharmacist before changing diet, starting supplements or beginning exercise, especially with other health conditions or medications.