



### 1. Stretching

Regular s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g is the first step, and it can be one of the most enjoyable. Stretching helps muscle rigidity (stiffness). It also helps muscles and joints stay flexible (able to bend). People who are more flexible have an easier time with everyday movement. Stretching increases range of motion of joints and helps with good posture. It protects against muscle strains or sprains, improves circulation, and releases muscle tension.

Stretching can be done at any time. The person in your care can start the day by stretching before getting out of bed. Have the person stretch throughout the day, while watching television or riding in a car.

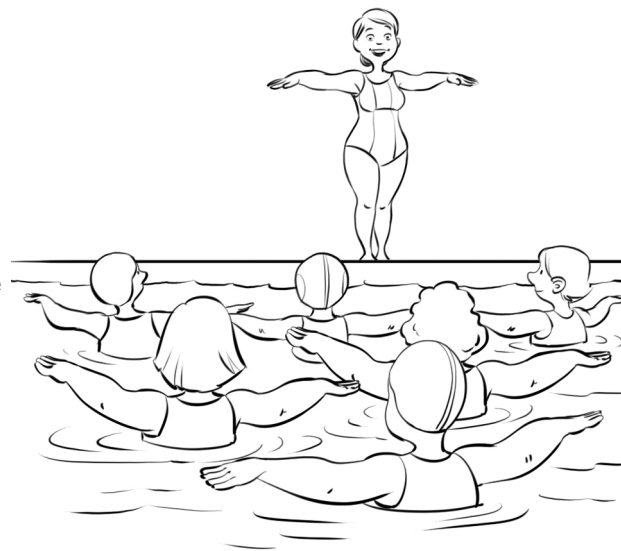
### 2. Strengthening

Muscles often weaken as a result of not being used. Weight training can be a major help in restoring these muscles. Targeted strength training in patients with muscle weakness significantly increases muscle power without any negative effects.

Most physical trainers do *not* have enough special training to work with people with disabilities, but increasingly it is possible to find special needs strength trainers who may be able to help.

### 3. Aerobics

Aerobic activities raise the heart rate and breathing, and promote cardiovascular (heart and lung) fitness. *Water therapy* is a time-tested form of healing. It is also a safe way for a person with a disability and the elderly to exercise because there is no danger of falling. Floating in water allows easy movement and little strain on joints and muscles. For those who have some weakness on one side of the body, water exercises are a good alternative because the affected side floats and feels lighter in water. Using a kickboard or simply walking in place in water may produce aerobic benefit. Water also resists movement so it produces increased heart rate in less time. Talk to a physical therapist about whether a water aerobics class might be appropriate for the person in your care. Aerobic exercise on land for the elderly or people with disabilities is more problematic. An option is chair exercises. These allow the person to remain seated while providing aerobic benefit. Several video products offer complete workouts, as do some TV programs.



### Taking Care of Yourself—Motivation

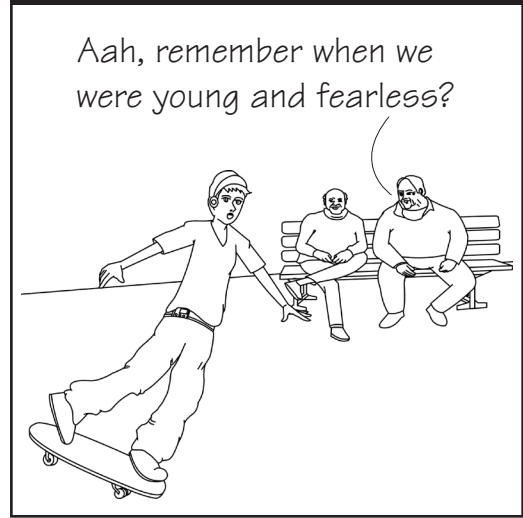
Motivation is the #1 factor determining whether people change their lifestyles or fail to follow their exercise and diet prescriptions. While motivation is an inside job, the caregiver has a part to play. Do what you can to make exercise fun. Make the new diet an experiment. If you make either diet or exercise too important, any failure becomes that much more significant. Keep it light hearted and join in as much as possible.

No single day of exercise or eating right makes much of a difference in your or your care receiver's health, but 30 days do. Sixty days makes even more of an impact; a year's worth of a new lifestyle will provide remarkable shifts in mood and self-esteem. People who take up the challenge presented by diet and exercise prescriptions make huge strides in their physical and emotional recovery. Imagine what it does to their independence!



*Inspiration*  
 Comparison is the thief of joy.  
 ~ Theodore Roosevelt

### Live Life Laughing!



**Memory Care**  
 Activities that had meaning to the person with Alzheimer's before he became ill, such as playing baseball with the family, may still be enjoyable if you plan the activity to take into account his remaining strengths and limitations. For example, he may not be able to keep score or follow all the rules, but may be glad to throw the ball. If he used to play tennis, would he enjoy hitting the ball back and forth?