



ADAPTING MOVEMENT

Moving My Way

RESOURCE FOR
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INSTRUCTORS



There Is More Than One Way to Move

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT TWO PEOPLE CAN BE DOING THE SAME ACTIVITY IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAYS?

One person may move quickly. Another may move slowly. One person may use a chair. Another may stand. One person may make a movement bigger. Another may make it smaller. One person may make an activity more challenging. Another may simplify it. Neither person is wrong.

Sometimes we get the idea that there is only one correct way to move. We may look around a class, game, sport, or activity and assume we should move exactly like everyone else. We may even stop participating because we think we are not doing it "right." But movement is not about copying. Movement is about finding a way that works.

Whether you are a child learning a new skill, a teenager in physical education, an adult trying a new activity, or an older adult adapting to changes in your body, you always have choices.

You can:

- move faster or slower
- make movements bigger or smaller
- use more or less effort
- sit, stand, or use support
- increase the challenge
- decrease the challenge
- try a different approach

The goal is not to look like everyone else. The goal is to stay engaged and keep moving.

In fact, some of the most successful movers are not the people who do everything perfectly. They are the people who learn how to adjust when something feels too hard, too easy, too fast, too slow, or simply not right for them.



There Is More Than One Way to Move

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT TWO PEOPLE CAN BE DOING THE SAME ACTIVITY IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAYS?

Think about something as ordinary as pushing a grocery cart through a store. At first glance, it might seem like everyone is doing the same thing. But if you look closely, people adapt this activity in different ways.

Some people:

- push the grocery cart with two hands
- push with one hand while holding a phone with the other hand
- walk quickly
- move slowly and carefully
- stop often
- move continuously
- stay close to the cart
- walk beside the cart
- use the cart for support and balance
- stand tall and upright
- lean forward while pushing

People also use different strategies while grocery shopping. Some start with produce, then dairy, then packaged foods and follow the same route every visit, make a detailed list and stick to it, shop section by section, move efficiently from one item to the next

Others:

- wander and browse
- follow whatever catches their attention
- stop to talk with people they know
- change direction when they remember something
- return to aisles they have already visited
- allow displays, signs, smells, or offers to influence where they go next

Some people finish quickly. Some take their time. Some enjoy the social experience. Some focus on getting the task done. None of these approaches are necessarily right or wrong. They are simply different ways of accomplishing the same goal.



There Is More Than One Way to Move

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT TWO PEOPLE CAN BE DOING THE SAME ACTIVITY IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAYS?

Movement classes, sports, games, and everyday activities are no different.

People may be participating in the same activity while:

- moving at different speeds
- choosing different levels of challenge
- taking breaks at different times
- using different equipment
- following different movement options
- responding differently to their energy, comfort, confidence, or abilities that day

What matters is not whether everyone moves the same way.

What matters is whether people find a way to participate that works for them.

One participant in our InterActive for Life research described it this way:

I really like the fact that there are many different ability levels, but we all feel very comfortable coming. Some may sit in the back, which is okay. They're participating and doing what they can and feel comfortable with that. I think that level of personal comfort is important.

For Nora, the joy of movement did not come from keeping up with everyone else. It came from knowing she could participate in a way that worked for her. She did not have to move the same way as others. She did not have to prove herself. She simply had to show up and choose the options that felt right for her body that day. That freedom to adapt allowed her to participate, connect with others, and continue enjoying movement.

The ability to adapt is one of the most important movement skills we can develop throughout life.



There Is More Than One Way to Move

A CHALLENGE FOR REFLECTION

The next time you join a game, activity, class, sport, or everyday movement experience, ask yourself:

"What adjustment could help me enjoy this experience even more?"

Perhaps the answer is:

- slowing down
- speeding up
- taking a break
- using support
- adding challenge
- simplifying the movement
- changing your position
- trying a different approach

Remember:

The goal is not to move like everyone else.

The goal is to find a way that works for you.

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE ADAPTING MOVEMENT

1 The Three Options Rule

For every activity you teach, provide:

☐ **An easier option**

(Change the intensity, complexity, pace, range of motion, or level of support.)

☐ **A more challenging option**

(Increase the intensity, complexity, pace, range of motion, or level of challenge.)

☐ **A different option**

(Change the position, equipment, approach, or movement strategy—for example seated, standing, using the non-dominant hand, changing direction, or working with a support.)

Challenge

Make all three options:

- ☐ visible
- ☐ accessible
- ☐ equally valued

Introduce options in a neutral tone.

Avoid presenting one option as the "real," "full," or "better" version.

The goal is not for everyone to choose the same option.

The goal is for participants to discover which option works best for them today.

What to Praise

Praise the ability to make informed movement choices. Examples:

- ✓ "You found an option that works for you."
- ✓ "That's a thoughtful adjustment."
- ✓ "I like how you explored a different approach."
- ✓ "You found the right level of challenge today."
- ✓ "Great problem-solving."



Instructor Activities

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1 The Three Options Rule

Reflection

The activity was:

The easier option I offered was:

The more challenging option I offered was:

The different option I offered was:

Which option did participants choose most often?

Did participants appear comfortable choosing different options?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Not yet

What could I do differently next time to communicate that all options are equally valuable?

Instructor Activities

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2 Choice Before Challenge

Before beginning a movement, invite participants to choose:

- seated or standing
- smaller or larger movements
- slower or faster pace
- more support or less support
- lower or higher intensity
- shorter or longer range of motion

Challenge

Count how many choices participants are offered for each movement.

Notice:

- Which options do you introduce first?
- Which options receive the most enthusiasm?
- Which options receive the most demonstrations?
- Which options get praised most often?
- Which options do participants seem hesitant to choose?

Reflection

If a participant chose any option, would they feel equally successful? Did my words, demonstrations, body language, or enthusiasm unintentionally favour one option?

One thing I will try next time:

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2 Choice Before Challenge

Inclusive, Non-Biased Praise

Instead of praising effort in only one direction (faster, harder, bigger, more independent), praise participants for making thoughtful movement choices.

Examples:

- ✓ "Great choice."
- ✓ "You found a version that works well for you."
- ✓ "I like how you adjusted that movement."
- ✓ "That's a smart way to stay involved."
- ✓ "You listened to what your body needed."
- ✓ "Nice problem-solving."
- ✓ "You found your own way to participate."
- ✓ "You adapted that movement really well."
- ✓ "That looks like the right level of challenge for you."
- ✓ "I can see you've found a pace that works for you today."
- ✓ "Thank you for making the movement your own."
- ✓ "You stayed engaged and found a way."
- ✓ "That's a great example of moving your way."
- ✓ "You've discovered an option that helps you participate comfortably and confidently."
- ✓ "I appreciate the way you're exploring different possibilities."
- ✓ "That adjustment seems to be helping."
- ✓ "You found a strategy that works for you."
- ✓ "I can see you making thoughtful movement decisions."
- ✓ "You adapted without giving up."



Instructor Activities

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2 Choice Before Challenge

Inclusive, Non-Biased Praise

Examples to Avoid:

- ⚠ "Good job standing instead of sitting."
- ⚠ "That's better."
- ⚠ "Try to keep up."
- ⚠ "See if you can do the full version."
- ⚠ "Don't take the easy option."
- ⚠ "Excellent! You're finally doing it properly."
- ⚠ "Let's get rid of the chair next time."
- ⚠ "You're stronger than the others."

InterActive for Life Reminder

Participants should leave feeling: **"The option I chose was respected,"**
not **"I should have chosen a different option."**

Success is not measured by whether participants move the same way.
Success is measured by whether participants feel confident,
comfortable, challenged, and engaged enough to keep moving.

Leadership Question

**Am I praising a movement, or am I praising a person's ability to make
an informed movement choice?**



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE ADAPTING MOVEMENT

3 Spot the Success

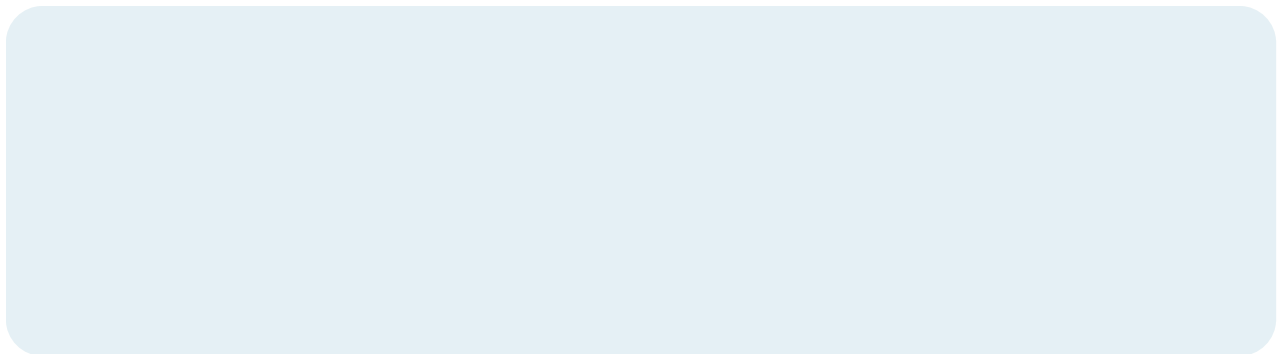
Look for participants who are successfully adapting.

Instead of praising only performance, praise decision-making:

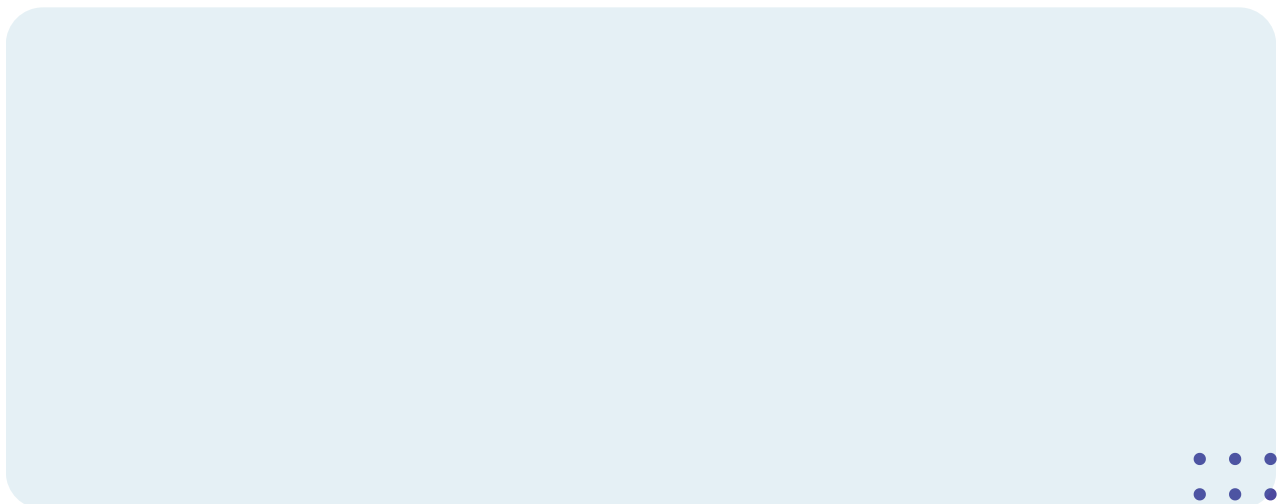
- "That was a strategic adjustment."
- "I like how you found a version that works for you."
- "Great job listening to your body."
- "That's a creative way to participate."

Reflection

What successful adaptations did I notice?



How did participants respond when adaptations were recognized positively?



Instructor Activities

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4

The Adaptability Challenge

During an activity, invite participants to explore:

"Can you find three different ways to do this movement?"

The goal is not to perform perfectly.

The goal is to explore possibilities.

Reflection

What creative movement adaptations did participants discover?

How did movement change when curiosity replaced comparison?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE ADAPTING MOVEMENT

5 Language Matters

Replace language that promotes sameness with language that promotes choice.

Instead of:

- ✗ "Everybody do this."
- ✗ "Keep up."
- ✗ "This is the correct way."

Try:

- ✓ "Find the version that works for you."
- ✓ "Choose your level of challenge."
- ✓ "How could you adapt this movement?"
- ✓ "There is more than one way to participate."

Reflection

One phrase I used that promoted choice:

One phrase I want to use more often:

One phrase I want to avoid:

InterActive For Life

MESSAGE

Did You Know? You can participate and:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✓ Move slower | ✓ Rest |
| ✓ Move faster | ✓ Add challenge |
| ✓ Use more support | ✓ Reduce challenge |
| ✓ Use less support | ✓ Change the movement |
| ✓ Sit | ✓ Move differently from others |
| ✓ Stand | |

Key Takeaway

- What matters most?
- Not matching others.
- Not looking perfect.
- Not keeping up.
- What matters is finding a way that allows you to continue participating and enjoying movement.
- **The goal is not to move like everyone else.**
- **The goal is to find a way that works for you.**
- Adapting movement is not a sign of limitation.
- It is a sign of awareness, confidence, creativity, and self-care.
- The more options we discover, the more opportunities we create to stay **InterActive for Life**.

Congratulations!

You have explored ways to:

- ✓ Adapt movement with confidence
- ✓ Stay engaged when movement becomes challenging
- ✓ Discover movement options that work for you
- ✓ Support others in finding their own way to move
- ✓ Experience the freedom of moving your way

InterActive for Life Reminder

DON'T QUIT. ADAPT.

Make it easier.

Make it harder.

Make it different.

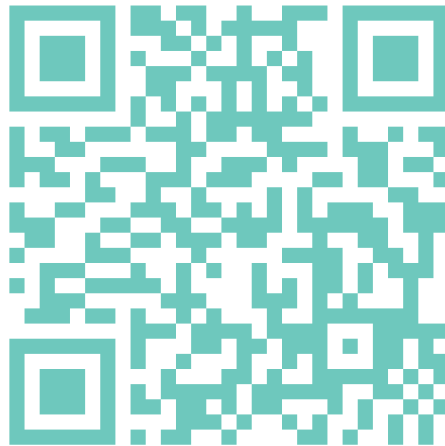
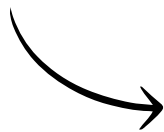
Keep Moving Your Way.





Curious for more?

- [Quick tips for physical activity participants](#)
- [Complete the InterActive for Life Inventory](#)



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