



FEELING ALIVE

Moving With Freedom

RESOURCE FOR
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INSTRUCTORS



When Movement Helps You Feel More Like Yourself

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SO INVOLVED IN AN ACTIVITY THAT YOU STOPPED THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF?

Maybe it happened while:

- walking in nature
- playing a game
- dancing to music
- stretching
- swimming
- gardening
- rolling through a park
- participating in a class
- playing with friends

For a moment, you were not worrying about how you looked, whether you were keeping up, or whether you were doing things perfectly. You were simply moving.

Many people think of movement as something they should do because it is good for their health. While movement certainly supports our health, some of the most meaningful movement experiences happen when we begin to enjoy the experience. These are often the moments when we feel most alive.

When movement feels alive:

- we become less aware of time
- we stop worrying about being judged
- we focus less on performance
- we become more engaged in what we are doing
- movement begins to feel natural, enjoyable, and freeing

Feeling alive does not require extraordinary athletic ability.

Sometimes feeling alive comes from:

- a walk with a friend
- moving to a favourite song
- learning a new skill
- sharing a laugh
- being fully present
- discovering something you enjoy



When Movement Helps You Feel More Like Yourself

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SO INVOLVED IN AN ACTIVITY THAT YOU STOPPED THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF?

The goal is not to move perfectly. The goal is to move in a way that helps you feel:

- present
- engaged
- energized
- joyful
- connected
- free

As one participant in our InterActive for Life research shared:

I live for these classes. My husband had been sick for years. So, for many years I didn't really do anything other than a little bit of walking while taking care of him. I'm getting younger and stronger. I feel like I've gotten a new life since coming here.

For this participant, feeling alive came from rediscovering movement after years of caring for someone else.

Let's imagine another context like a physical education class or a recreational environment where a participant describes the experience of joining a team:

At the beginning of the season, I was nervous about joining the team because I didn't think I was very good. I spent so much time worrying about what other people thought. But after a while, I stopped thinking about whether I was making mistakes and started focusing on playing. Sometimes I'd look up and realize practice was almost over. I wasn't thinking about being judged anymore—I was just having fun.

For this participant, feeling alive happened when attention shifted from:

"What do people think about me?"

to

"I am enjoying what I am doing."



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

1

Design For Engagement, Not Just Exercise

Ask yourself:

"What parts of this activity will participants enjoy?"

Consider:

- music
- play
- exploration
- storytelling
- social connection
- movement choice
- personal challenges

Reflection

Participants seemed most engaged when:

What would I keep?

What would I change?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

2

Help Participants Notice Success

Help participants notice:

- what feels easier
- what feels enjoyable
- what feels meaningful
- what keeps them engaged

Reflection

What successes did participants notice?

Which success seemed to create the most positive emotion?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

3 Reduce Fear of Judgment

Observe:

- Are participants looking around nervously?
- Are participants watching others more than themselves?
- Are participants willing to try new things?
- Are participants smiling and interacting?

Reflection

What signs suggested participants felt comfortable?

What could help participants feel more free to participate?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

4

Ask Experience-Based Questions

Instead of:

✗ "Was that hard enough?"

Try:

- ✓ "How did that feel?"
- ✓ "What part did you enjoy most?"
- ✓ "When did you feel most engaged?"
- ✓ "What helped you stay present?"

Reflection

Which question generated the richest responses?

What did participants teach me about their experience?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

5 Teach Toward an E-Motional Goal

Use the Movement Mood Barometer at the beginning of a session. Ask:

"How would you like to feel when today's activity is over?"

Examples:

- energized
- calm
- joyful
- confident
- connected
- refreshed

Reflection

Today's emotional goal was:

Did participants appear to experience that feeling?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not yet

What contributed most?

Resource: Movement Mood Barometer:

<https://function2flow.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Movement-Mood-Barometer.pdf>

CLASS COLOUR CODE	ICON	E-MOTIONS
Red Aggressive		Quick/Aggressive/Competitive Activities that offer an outlet to release stress, feelings of aggression or frustration. Examples: cardio boxing, pickleball, MTT training, cardio drumming
Yellow Uplifting		Uplifting, Joyous, Ecstatic, Energizing, Invigorating Activities that offer opportunities to move joyfully to music with or without partner that promotes fun and laughter with options for freestyle flow or moving in unison. Class promotes feelings of success (graduated progressions). Examples: freestyle dance, synchronized movement (i.e., clapping, tapping, cardio drumming/body percussion, belly dancing)
Light Green Grounded		Predictable/Grounded Activities that follow consistent format designed to promote a mindful, rooted flow with repeated sequences. Attention is directed to breath, feeling body movement and feeling very present. Examples: Mindful walking, Tai Chi, Yoga, range-of-motion exercises, meditation classes, mindfulness training
Orange Cognitive Challenge		Cognitive Challenge-Dual Tasking Classes that complexity the experience that combine physical activity with cognitive challenges, i.e., counting, naming, problem-solving while engaged in movement. Examples: "Simon(s) Says" games, Cross-Crawl
Blue Peaceful		Slow/Peaceful/Relaxing Activities/Classes that offer progressive relaxation, stretching/range of motion movements, mindful breathing. Examples: Tai Chi, Yoga, Range-of-motion exercises, meditation classes, Mindfulness training
Purple Spontaneous		Spontaneous/Creative Activities or games that offer variations in intensity, speed (quick bursts and holds), equipment/props (i.e., scarfs, beach balls, rubber chickens). Examples: cooperative/modified games, i.e., chair volleyball, pool noodle games, partner dance, ping pong, scarf juggling

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE FEELING ALIVE

6 Notice What You Praise

Do participants hear praise for:

- enjoyment
- engagement
- curiosity
- presence
- participation

Reflection

Which participant comments or behaviours did I recognize today?

Did my praise reinforce performance or experience?





Look For Signs OF ALIVENESS

During your next class, observe:

- When are participants smiling?
- When do they lose track of time?
- When does energy naturally increase?
- When do people seem immersed in the experience?

Reflection

The strongest signs of aliveness were:

How can I create more of those moments?



Feeling Alive

REFLECTION

Complete these sentences:

Today I felt most alive when:

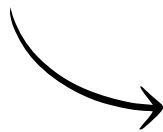
The movement that helped me most was:

One thing I want to experience again is:



Curious for more?

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



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Created from the InterActive4Life and the International Council on Active Aging
Research Project in partnership with the project's advisory committee

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