



MOVING IN SYNC

Responsive Rhythms

RESOURCE FOR
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INSTRUCTORS



When Movement Becomes Something We Experience Together

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW EASY IT IS TO START TAPPING YOUR FOOT WHEN SOMEONE ELSE IS TAPPING THEIRS?

Or how people often begin walking at the same pace when they walk side by side?

Have you ever joined a group where everyone was clapping, singing, paddling, dancing, exercising, or moving together and suddenly felt yourself becoming part of the rhythm?

This is called synchrony.

Synchrony happens when people naturally begin responding to one another's movements, energy, timing, or rhythm.

It can happen during:

- walking together
- dancing
- exercising
- playing sports
- singing
- paddling
- drumming
- stretching
- breathing together
- simply sharing space with others

What makes synchrony so interesting is that it does not require perfect coordination. In fact, moving in sync is not about everyone doing exactly the same thing. It is about feeling connected through a shared experience. Sometimes we lead. Sometimes we follow. Sometimes we simply move alongside one another. Over time, we begin responding to one another's pace, energy, and presence.



When Movement Becomes Something We Experience Together

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW EASY IT IS TO START TAPPING YOUR FOOT WHEN SOMEONE ELSE IS TAPPING THEIRS?

Many people find that movement feels different when shared. Effort can feel lighter. Energy can feel stronger. Motivation can increase. A simple activity can become more enjoyable because others are participating too.

As one participant in our InterActive for Life research shared:

There's something about being in a group that's different than doing it on your own. It's more interesting. It's more joyful. Everybody wants to participate and put energy into it, be present, be active.

When we move together, everything feels easier. It's the energy of the group. Moving in synchrony was less about coordination and more about shared energy.

InterActive for Life Reflection

Moving in sync does not mean:

- ✗ moving perfectly
- ✗ moving identically
- ✗ moving at the same ability level

Moving in sync means:

- ✓ noticing others
- ✓ responding to shared rhythms
- ✓ contributing your energy
- ✓ allowing others to influence your experience
- ✓ experiencing movement as something shared

Challenge

The next time you move with others, ask yourself:

"When do I feel most connected to the rhythm or energy of the people around me?"



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

1

Create Opportunities for Shared Rhythm

Look for opportunities where participants can experience common timing or rhythm.

Examples:

- walking together
- moving to music
- drumming
- counting together
- partner activities
- group patterns

Reflection

When does the group appear most connected?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

2 Use Music with Purpose

Music is a powerful tool for synchrony.

Experiment with:

- different tempos
- familiar songs
- rhythmic cues
- music matching the emotional goal

Challenge

Observe how music influences participation and engagement.



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

3

Pair Participants Strategically

Build activities where participants can:

- move side by side
- mirror movements
- work in pairs
- share pacing
- encourage one another

Reflection

What happens when participants move with someone instead of beside someone?

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

4

Encourage Shared Energy

Invite participants to notice:

- smiles
- encouragement
- gestures
- laughter
- rhythm

Challenge

Ask participants:

"What helped you stay engaged today?"

Notice how often the answer involves other people.



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

5 Notice What Creates Synchrony

Observe your activity.

Ask:

- When did people begin moving together naturally?
- When did energy increase?
- When did participants seem most engaged?
- What helped create shared momentum?

Reflection

What conditions supported synchrony?



Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

6 Teach Toward an E-Motional Goal

Use the Movement Mood Barometer at the start of the session.

Ask:

"How would you like to feel while moving together today?"

Examples:

- connected
- energized
- joyful
- confident
- inspired

Then design activities that support that emotional goal.

Reflection

Did synchrony help participants experience that feeling?

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, HIT 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 complexify the experience that combine physical activity with cognitive challenges, i.e., counting, naming, problem-solving while engaged in movement. Examples: "Simon(e) Says" games, Cross-Crawl
Blue Restful		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 MOVING IN SYNC

7

Notice What You Praise

Do participants only hear praise for:

- performance?
- skill?
- effort?

Or do they also receive recognition for:

- helping others stay engaged?
- creating positive energy?
- supporting group rhythm?
- encouraging others?

Inclusive Praise Examples

- ✓ "I can see people helping each other stay engaged."
- ✓ "Thank you for bringing your energy to the group."
- ✓ "I appreciate the way everyone is moving together."
- ✓ "You helped create a positive rhythm today."
- ✓ "I like how people are responding to one another."
- ✓ "The group is creating something together."

Instructor Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVING IN SYNC

8 Synchrony Audit

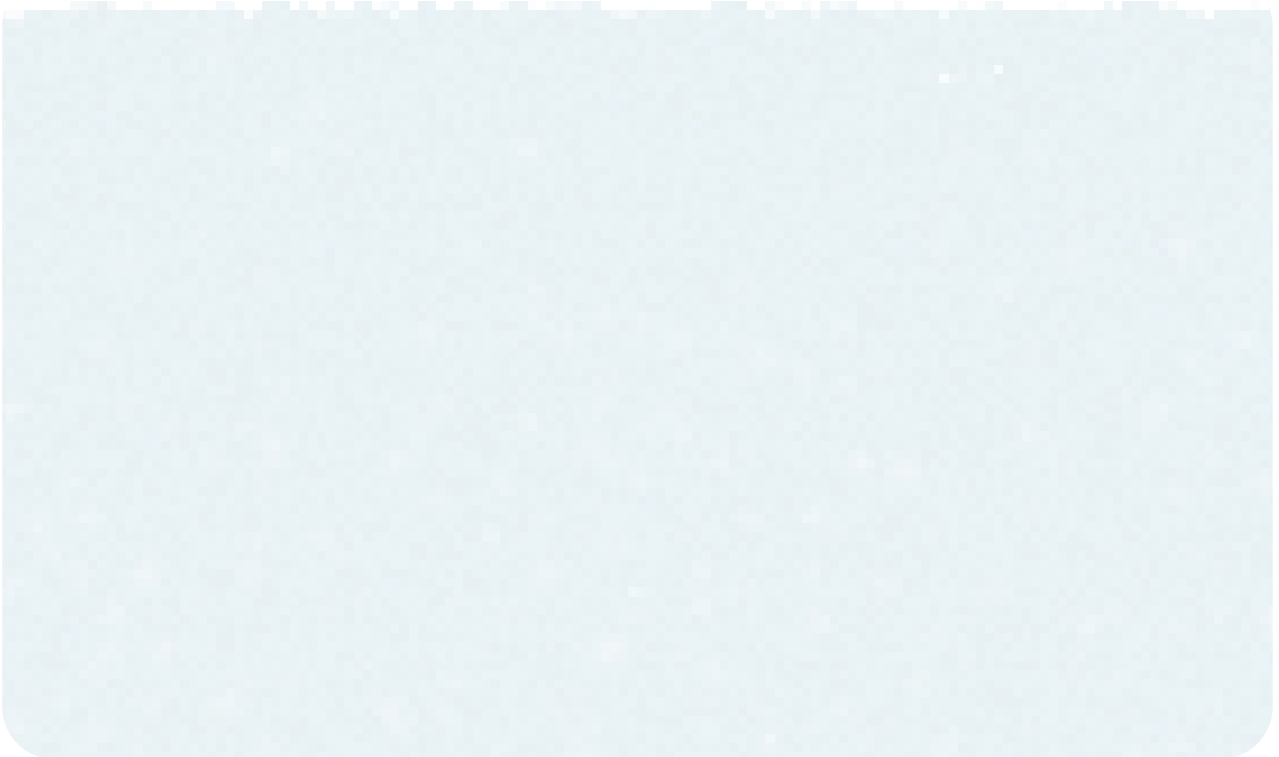
Observe your next session

Notice:

- When do participants seem most connected?
- When does shared rhythm emerge?
- When does energy spread through the group?
- What moments feel collective?

Reflection

How can you intentionally create more opportunities for synchrony?





Instructor Tips

FOR SUPPORTING RESPONSIVE RHYTHMS

Tip #1: Synchrony Cannot Be Forced

It emerges when people have opportunities to respond to one another.

Tip #2: Rhythm Exists Beyond Music

Rhythm can come from:

- walking
- breathing
- talking
- games
- shared effort
- movement patterns

Tip #3: Shared Energy Is Powerful

Participants often remember how the group felt more than the specific exercises they completed.

Tip #4: Create Conditions for Collective Engagement

The goal is not perfect coordination.

The goal is helping participants feel connected through shared experience.

InterActive For Life

REMINDER

Synchrony is not about becoming the same. It is about becoming connected.

Every shared rhythm.

Every shared laugh.

Every shared effort.

Every moment of encouragement. These are movements that help us feel part of something larger than ourselves.

Key Takeaway

Moving together can help us feel lifted together.

When shared rhythms emerge, movement often becomes:

- easier
- more enjoyable
- more engaging
- more meaningful

Synchrony helps transform movement from an individual experience into a shared one.

Congratulations!

You have explored ways to:

- ✓ Notice shared rhythms
- ✓ Appreciate shared energy
- ✓ Experience synchrony without comparison
- ✓ Support others through movement
- ✓ Create more enjoyable group experiences
- ✓ Feel lifted by moving together

InterActive for Life Reminder

NOTICE. RESPOND. MOVE TOGETHER.

Feel the rhythm.

Share the energy.

Lift one another.

Move with presence.

Move in sync.

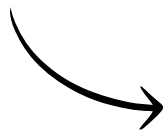
Together feels different.





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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