



The Better Sleep for Carers Program  
Week 3 Handout: **Sleep & Activity Levels**

**A Gentle Reminder**

Sleep is shaped as much by what happens in the day as by what happens at night.

This week we focus on how daytime activity, movement, and routine can support better sleep for both you and the person you care for.

Rather than asking you to “do more,” our aim is to help you plan small, sustainable patterns that fit real caring life.

## What We'll Explore Today

We will:

- Check in together and reflect on last week's home plan
- Revisit why daytime routine matters for sleep
- Think about how to plan activity realistically
- Explore how movement and exercise influence sleep
- Try a Guided Imagery practice ("Leaves on a Stream")
- Introduce five gentle seated exercises you can use at home
- Help you shape a simple Daytime Activity Plan for the week ahead

We'll end with a gentle check-out and look ahead to next week.

## Recap: Creating a Calm Evening

Last week we focused on wind-down routines. You may remember:

- Begin slowing things down 30-60 minutes before bed
- Choose calming activities (reading, music, gentle breathing, photo albums)
- Reduce stimulating activity and bright screens
- Use sensory cues: dim lights, cooler room, quiet sounds, soothing scent

These evening steps work best when they sit alongside a steady, active daytime rhythm - which is what we turn to now.

## Why Daytime Activity Matters for Sleep

Your body clock (circadian rhythm) needs clear signals about when it is day and when it is night. Daytime activity is one of the strongest of those signals.

When your days are more active and structured, you are more likely to:

- Feel naturally alert in the morning
- Build healthy “sleep pressure” across the day
- Fall asleep more easily at night
- Sleep more deeply and continuously

When days are very quiet, irregular, or mostly sedentary, sleep often becomes lighter, more fragmented, and harder to settle into.

Daytime activity helps by:

### 1) Anchoring your body clock

Movement, daylight, and routine tell the brain: *“This is wake time.”*

This makes night-time sleep signals clearer.

### 2) Boosting daytime energy and mood

Gentle activity, mental engagement, and social contact reduce sluggishness and low mood - both of which can interfere with sleep.

### 3) Building natural sleep drive

The longer we are awake and gently active, the more the body becomes ready for sleep by evening.

#### 4) Reducing night restlessness

Movement helps release tension that might otherwise show up as tossing, turning, or wakefulness at night.

#### 5) Reducing reliance on naps

When days are more engaging, there is less need to nap out of boredom or low energy. Short naps can be fine - long or late naps often disrupt night sleep.

## What Makes a Healthy Daytime Rhythm?

You don't need a perfect schedule - just a few steady anchors.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Why it Helps Sleep</b>
Morning light	Sets the body clock
Gentle movement	Builds sleep pressure
Regular meals	Reinforces rhythm
Purposeful activity	Supports mood and alertness
Social contact	Reduces isolation and stress
Calm evening wind-down	Prepares the body for rest

Aim for small, repeatable habits rather than big changes.

## Practical Daytime Tips for Carers

If helpful, you might try:

- Same-ish wake time each day
- A little morning daylight together

- One gentle movement activity (walk, chair exercises, stretching)
- One purposeful task (tidying, sorting photos, watering plants, light chores)
- One social moment (phone call, chat with neighbour, conversation together)
- Keep naps short (around 20-30 minutes) and earlier in the day if needed
- Avoid long periods lying down during the day unless resting due to illness

## Planning Daytime Activity - A Kinder Approach

Instead of asking, “*What should I do?*” try asking:

“What is one small thing that would make today feel steadier?”

A few guiding ideas

### **Commit - but gently**

Treat activity like part of your routine, not an optional extra. Even 5-10 minutes counts.

### **Be realistic**

Plan for the real you - tired, busy, interrupted, or low on energy.

### **Use habit stacking**

Link movement to something you already do:

- Walk after breakfast
- Stretch after brushing teeth
- Gentle movement while listening to the radio

### **Plan for two kinds of days**

Good Day Plan (higher energy):

- Longer walk
- Gardening
- Group activity
- More movement outdoors

Low-Energy Day Plan:

- Chair exercises
- Short stroll
- Gentle stretching
- Light chores

The goal is not “doing everything” - it is doing something.

## Exercise, Movement and Sleep

Movement does not have to mean “exercise class.” Even light daily activity supports sleep.

What tends to help sleep most:

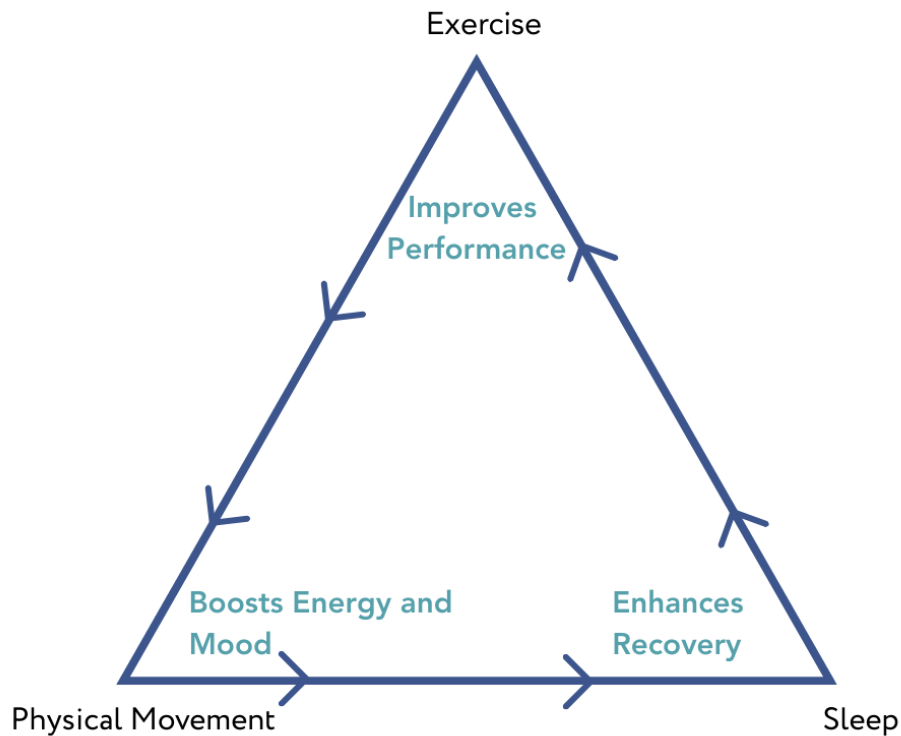
- Morning or afternoon movement
- Mix of aerobic activity (walking, cycling, swimming) and gentle strength work
- Regular, moderate activity rather than intense bursts

What can interfere with sleep:

- Very vigorous exercise late in the evening
- High-intensity workouts close to bedtime

If you move in the evening, keep it gentle - stretching, slow walking, or relaxation.

### The Cycle of Exercise, Movement & Sleep



### Guided Imagery: Leaves on a Stream

Guided imagery gives your mind a gentle “time out” from worry. Many carers find this helpful in the evening.

Before the practice, rate your tension from 1-5  
(1 = not tense, 5 = very tense)

Afterwards, notice:

- Did your tension change?
- What was this like for you?
- Could your relative enjoy listening with you?

You might try this again at home on a quiet evening before bed.

The sound file for this guided practice is available on our website. Please visit the 'Home Practices and Course Handouts' section and click through to 'Better Sleep Program for Carers'

## Five Gentle Seated Exercises (Safe and Simple)

Choose a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor.

1. Chest stretch - hold 5-10 seconds, repeat 5 times
2. Upper body twist - 5 times each side
3. Hip marching - 5 lifts each leg
4. Ankle stretches - 2 sets of 5 each foot
5. Neck rotations - 3 each side

These are not about fitness goals - they are about circulation, energy, and easing tension.

## Chest Stretch



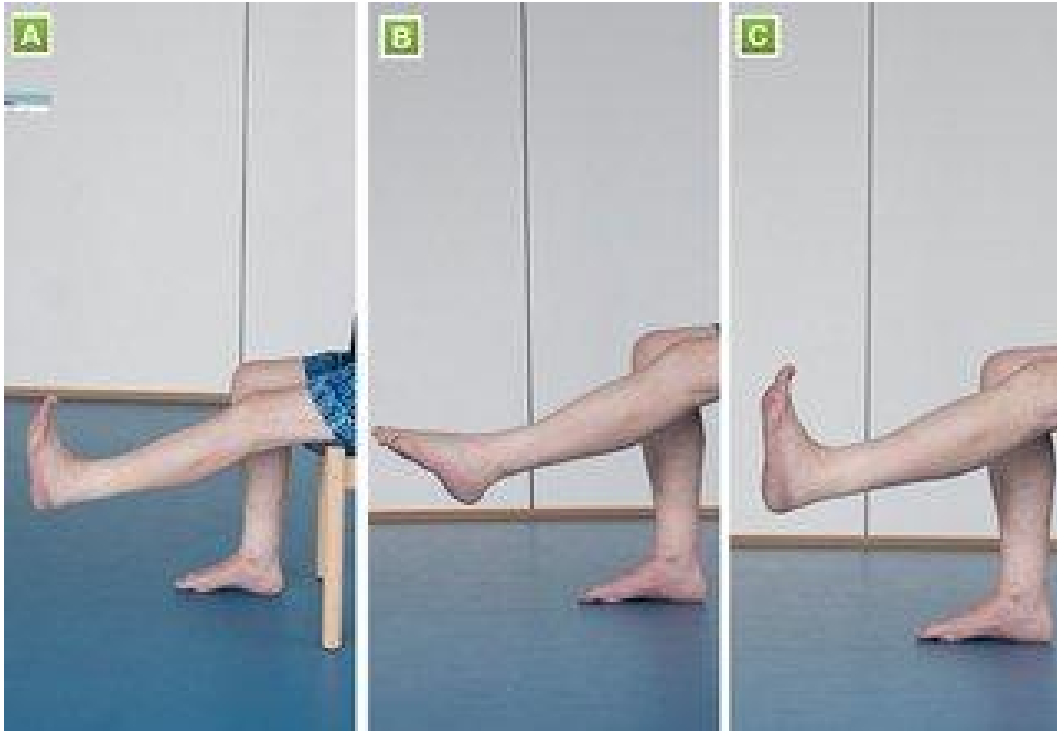
## Upper Body Twist



### Hip Marching



### Ankle Stretches



### Neck Rotations



## Putting It Into Practice

Some things that can disturb sleep (if done late in the day):

- Too much caffeine
- Long or late naps
- Bright screens before bed
- Very bright lighting in the evening
- Certain diuretics (which can increase night-time toileting)

Where possible, shift these earlier in the day rather than eliminating them entirely.

## Your Daytime Activity Plan (Week 3)

*(Printable template - choose what feels realistic.)*

1) Morning anchor (sets the day)

I/we will try one of these most days:

- Sit by a bright window
- Go outside for 10–20 minutes
- Short morning walk
- Breakfast together in daylight
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

2) One gentle movement each day

Choose your Good Day option:

- Walk outside
- Gardening
- Light exercise class
- Cycling / swimming
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose your Low-Energy Day option:

- Chair exercises
- Gentle stretching
- Slow walk
- Light household task
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3) One purposeful activity

Today we will do one of these together or separately:

- Sorting photos
- Light tidying
- Cooking together
- Watering plants
- Craft, puzzle, or reading
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4) One social moment

- Phone call
- Chat with neighbour
- Family message
- Shared tea/coffee
- Group activity

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5) Naps (if needed)

If we nap, we will aim for:

- No nap
- 10–20 minutes
- Before mid-afternoon
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6) Evening transition (links to sleep)

After dinner we will:

- Lower lights
- Reduce screens
- Do Signal Breath together
- Try Guided Imagery or gentle stretching
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 7) Noticing what happens (no judgement)

This week I hope might improve:

- Falling asleep more easily
- Less night waking
- More daytime energy
- Calmer evenings
- Better mood

At the end of the week, I'll notice:

What worked well?

---

What felt difficult?

---

What I might keep or adjust next week:

---

## Take-Home Messages

- A steady daytime rhythm supports better night sleep
- Gentle movement is enough - consistency matters most
- Guided imagery and relaxation can lower stress and prepare the body for rest
- Even seated exercises can boost energy and reduce tension
- Small, realistic habits make the biggest difference over time

## What's Coming Next Week

- Troubleshooting your home plan
- Reviewing your relative's routine
- Understanding night-time behaviour
- Stretching for stress

See you next week.