

Balancing objects

Performance

20 minutes

You will need:

An item for each participant to balance: a peacock feather is ideal but a wooden spoon, a cardboard tube or bamboo garden cane work too

One-to-one
Dementia-friendly



Fun
Physical
Engaging

Object balancing helps build hand-eye coordination, balance, body and spatial awareness as it requires you to coordinate your movements to keep the object upright.

To begin:

Explain to your group that you are going to try and balance an object on your hand. Hand out the items that you will be using. Invite the group to place the object on their outstretched hand with their palm facing upwards. The object should be pointing upwards as vertically as possible. They will need to steady the item with their other hand.

Next:

Show how you can gently let go with your other hand so the object is standing upright – explain that if it tips to the left then people should move their hand to the left to counterbalance it. You might want to demonstrate the movement before inviting your group to give it a go.

Demonstrate how you can gently move your hand to counter whichever direction the object is falling in, trying to move smoothly and not jerk the object. Explain that the secret to balancing objects is to watch the top of the object – this gives more visual clues about the direction it will fall to help the brain coordinate your hand to keep the object upright.

Then:

As a group, try different points of balance on your bodies – the back of each hand, on one fingertip, an elbow, a foot! You could also try to pass the object from one hand to the other hand. Show the group how to do this – you will need to give the object a little pop to help it jump across, and remember to keep your fingers closed tight against each other and the hand open. If your group get good at this, they can try making it jump from hand to foot.

You could also:

Have a go at standing with the feather balanced on the hand if participants are stable enough on their feet.

Anyone who wants to could also try to take a little walk with their balanced item. If you are going to try this, you will need to make sure that the space you are in is nice and clear as people's focus will be more on the object than their environment.

Credit:

Upswing. Developed in partnership with Silk Court Residential Home, Anchor Care Homes.

