

MHA Sunday



One Sunday, one service, one church



Biblical Yoga for MHA Sunday

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Biblical Yoga

Introduction

Biblical Yoga is designed to help people living with dementia to connect to Bible scripture and enable discussion. Biblical Yoga breaks down a passage from the Bible by involving participants with low intensity and low impact movements. The passage is broken down to enable participants to reflect on meaning and give opportunity to express their beliefs and ask any questions.

Movement and exercise are an important part of our wellbeing. It has been designed to be inclusive and based around people being in a seated position. - there are between 10-15 movements per session.

Before you begin

- Visually check the room for hazards. There should be ample space to the side of each person but not so far away that people feel disconnected from each other. It is good practice to remind people of this throughout the session, especially when moves involve arms or shoulders.
- Try to use a room that is light and where a window can be opened in warm weather. Consider closing the doors if there is likely to be substantial noise distraction.
- Make everyone aware that if they have any medical issues that make them unsure of whether they should participate then they are welcome to observe.
- Remind people that if they are in any pain then they should only do movements that feel comfortable. Should any of the movements cause pain and discomfort they should stop immediately and inform someone who can get medical attention if needed.
- You may want an easel flipchart or white board to note down points of discussion.

Starting your session

Warm up – singing together helps to create a sense of belonging, so you may want to start by singing a well known hymn, clapping hands and/or use musical instruments. The level of warm up will depend on the participants in the group and their level of interaction.

Main exercise – the bible reading with the actions. Once the passage has been read using the actions at each of the points described below, you can explain that you will read it again and people can repeat the exercises with you if they wish.

Demonstrate to participants how to do each movement. This can be done by the reader or by another person demonstrating the actions. In a larger church you may want two people to model the activities as the passage is read. Show them how they can do an easier version of the movement and correct bad posture.

Throughout the session, walk around and engage with participants on a one-to-one level, showing them how to do the movements.

Each session has a title followed by text, that has been adapted from The New English Bible. The words highlighted are the words to do movements to. Illustrations demonstrate each movement. There are suggestions for how many movements to do, however, you may want to adapt this to the group depending on how engaged they are in the session.

The session delivery - Pentecost

Have you ever been surrounded by people but felt so alone? The disciples had each other but they must still have felt alone. We all want to feel connected to a community, even those of us who like our own company. Today we find inspiration to connect with others and connect with the Bible.

Send forth your spirit oh Lord and renew the face of the earth. Psalm 104:30

Acts 2:1-11

On the day of Pentecost the apostles **gathered** in one room. (The apostles had come together to celebrate the harvest. Coming together is an important element of Christian life. Coming together should strengthen us and confirm our calling. What elements of being together in church have strengthened you?)



The exercise

Raise both arms straight in front of you and move your hands slowly together until they meet touching fingertips to corresponding fingertips on the other hand.

A sound like a **strong wind** filled the house. (Imagine the sound of wind whistling through the window frame. We cannot see wind but we can feel and hear it through what it affects. How does the sound of a breeze or wind blowing make you feel?)



The exercise

Hold arms up above head and sway from side to side.

How would you feel if you saw fire? The apostles had heard a strong wind and saw flames. Can we imagine how they felt? Did anyone here have an open fire growing up, a log burner or remember standing by a bonfire? Flames look like tongues.



The exercise

Place arms above head with hands together and move hands to rest on head.

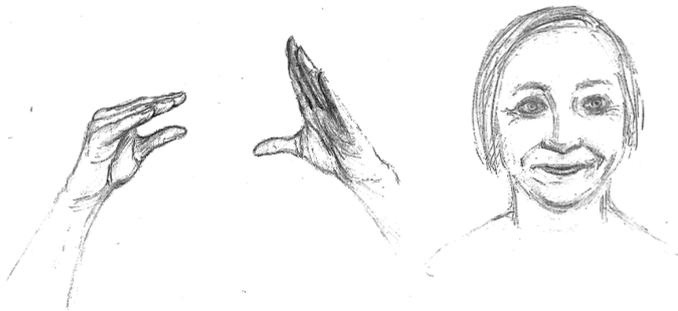
They were **filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to speak foreign languages. (How many languages do we speak here? Did you learn any languages at school? What would the apostles be able to do with their new gift of languages?)



The exercise

Place arms out to the side and hold for 5 seconds and relax.

The Holy Spirit had given them the gift of **communication**. How do we communicate? It is estimated that 93% of communication is non verbal. We need to learn to trust our non verbal communication skills and practice them. Communication is vitally important to our wellbeing. God has given us all the gift of communication, to be able to spread the Good News.



The exercise

Raise hands and close fingers and thumb together to imitate talking. Encourage people to smile and

There were people from every nation in Jerusalem and they each **heard** the apostles speak their own languages. Have you been somewhere foreign and then heard a familiar English accent?



The exercise

Turn head to the right and then the left. Repeat.

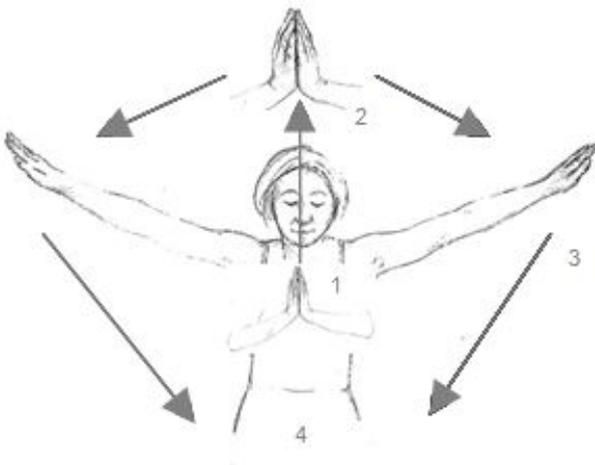
The people were **amazed!** Imagine a familiar voice, you look carefully and it is your friend who you haven't seen in years! Do you remember the joy you both felt in seeing each other again? Adapting ways of communicating with someone with dementia can have similarly joyful results. Music has proven to be a great way of helping people with dementia to communicate and express how they feel.



The exercise

Open eyes wide and stretch open the mouth in an amazed expression.

The apostles were preaching in every language about the **marvels of God.** What marvels has the Lord God worked in your lives? The apostles were given the gift of communication. We too have gifts. Let us make time to use and develop those gifts. What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad. Psalm 126: 3.



The exercise

Place hands together in a praying position. Raise your praying hands together as if they are going up to heaven as you breathe in. Hold and breathe out as you lower your arms to the side and relax. Repeat twice.

Cool down

A time of reflection, meditation and/or prayer. Use counting for breathing techniques and imagery from the bible reading as part of the meditation. Refreshments may be offered before further discussion. You could also use a whiteboard to write down some of the key thoughts and reflections from the passage.

There are suggested prayers and follow up exercises listed below. Depth of discussion will depend on the participants in the session.

After discussion, it's a great time to get feedback on the session. Some things to focus on for future sessions are:

- How easy were the movements?

Prayers

May the spirit work in us all today and inspire us to communicate in different ways.

Help us to embrace non verbal communication.

May the Lord continue to guide us as we continue to spread the Good News to everyone.

Lord's Prayer.

Follow-up Exercises

- Try spending some time with a friend after agreeing to only use non verbal communication for 30 minutes and then reflect and discuss it.
- Learn some Sign Language or Makaton.
- Revise some school French.
- Create a quiz based on different languages and countries.