



FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT GUIDE

**Build Strength and
Resilience Without Draining
Your Recovery**

From The Healing Hierarchy
Restore Function. Rebuild Your Body.

JARROD COOPER - ND

THE CORE PRINCIPLE

Movement should build your body up, not drain it further.
Exercise is a controlled dose of stress that stimulates adaptation. Too much breaks you down. Too little and the body deconditions. The dose is everything.

In a healthy system, the therapeutic window is wide.
You can train hard, recover quickly, and adapt.
In a sensitised system, that window narrows dramatically.
What used to be a moderate session is now an excessive demand.
Pushing through is not discipline. In a sensitised body, it is a strategy that backfires every time.

The right movement at the right time strengthens you.
The wrong movement at the wrong time sets you back.



MATCH MOVEMENT TO YOUR STATE

IF YOU ARE ACTIVELY HEALING

Symptoms are present, recovery is slow, energy is unpredictable.

YOUR PROTOCOL:

- Daily walking (*20–30 minutes, ideally outside, ideally morning*)
- 2–3 light strength sessions per week (*bodyweight or very light load*)
- No high-intensity training. No long cardio sessions.
- If a 15-minute walk leaves you spent for the rest of the day, rest is the protocol.

Rest is not laziness. It is the intervention.

The system needs enough baseline stability before movement can become therapeutic.

IF YOU ARE STABILISING

Symptoms are settling, sleep is improving, energy is becoming more consistent.

YOUR PROTOCOL:

- Continue daily walking
- Strength training 2–3 times per week with moderate load and progressive overload
- Add Zone 2 cardio 2–3 times per week
- Zone 2 = low intensity, conversational pace
(*walking, easy cycling, swimming laps without pushing*)

The temptation at this stage is to rush back to previous training levels. Do not. The system that crashed once is more vulnerable to crashing again if the ramp-up is too aggressive.

IF YOU ARE OPTIMISING

Symptoms are resolved, energy is stable, recovery is functioning normally.

YOUR PROTOCOL:

- Higher-intensity work becomes appropriate: intervals, VO2 max training
- Progressive overload in strength with real intent
- Continue Zone 2 cardio as base conditioning
- Monitor recovery. Performance goals are realistic again, but recovery must still be respected.

THE THREE MOVEMENT PRIORITIES

Walking

The most therapeutically valuable form of movement for someone in recovery. Thirty minutes per day, ideally outside, ideally in the morning.

Walking pumps the lymphatic system (your body's waste removal network, which has no pump of its own and relies on movement to circulate). It exposes you to natural light, supporting circadian rhythm and vitamin D production. It activates the parasympathetic nervous system without elevating cortisol. It does all of this without asking the body for anything it cannot afford to give.

Strength Training

Muscle is metabolic currency. It is the primary site where your body disposes of glucose, which means more muscle mass directly improves insulin sensitivity and blood sugar regulation. Muscle mass is also one of the strongest predictors of resilience as you age. It protects bone density, supports hormonal signalling, and maintains functional movement patterns.

Two to three sessions per week, moderate load, controlled tempo, adequate rest between sets. You should leave a session feeling like you worked, not like you need to lie down. If you cannot recover from a session within twenty-four hours, the intensity or volume is too high for your current state.

Zone 2 Cardio

Low-intensity aerobic work at a pace where you can hold a conversation comfortably. At this intensity, your body preferentially burns fat for fuel, builds mitochondrial density, and improves the efficiency of cellular energy production. The very machinery that is underperforming in a sensitised system.

Walking counts. Cycling at an easy pace counts. Swimming laps without pushing counts. The threshold is simple: if you cannot talk in full sentences, you are working too hard for where your body is right now.



THE SIX FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT PATTERNS

These are the movement patterns your body was designed for. They keep joints mobile, muscles balanced, and the nervous system communicating properly with the musculoskeletal system. A two-year-old can sit in a deep squat for twenty minutes. Most adults cannot hold it for thirty seconds. That is not ageing. That is the accumulation of sitting, poor posture, and patterns that were never maintained.

Squat

Sit-to-stand movement. Used every time you sit down, pick something up from the ground, or lower yourself. Train with bodyweight squats, goblet squats, or assisted squats holding a doorframe for support.

Lunge

Single-leg stability and strength. Used when walking stairs, stepping over objects, and any single-leg balance activity. Train with walking lunges, reverse lunges, or step-ups.

Hinge

Bending from the hips with a flat back. Used when picking things up, bending forward, and loading the posterior chain (glutes, hamstrings, lower back). Train with Romanian deadlifts, kettlebell swings, or hip bridges.

Push

Pushing away from you or pushing yourself away from a surface. Used when opening doors, getting up from the floor, or placing objects on shelves. Train with push-ups (wall, incline, or floor), overhead press, or chest press.

Pull

Pulling toward you. Used when opening drawers, carrying bags, and any rowing motion. Train with rows (dumbbell, cable, or resistance band), pull-ups (or assisted), or face pulls.

Rotation

Twisting through the torso. Used when reversing a car, throwing a ball, swinging a bat, or reaching behind you. Train with Russian twists, cable wood chops, or simply twisting and rotating your torso through its range of motion throughout the day.

GETTING ASSESSED

If you are unsure where to start, an exercise physiologist or qualified movement specialist can identify imbalances and create a training program matched to your current state.

In Australia, you may be able to access an exercise physiologist through a chronic disease management plan (GP care plan) if you have an ongoing injury or condition lasting more than three months. This typically covers up to six sessions.

EVERYDAY MOVEMENT

Movement extends beyond the gym. Simple changes throughout your day compound over time:

Take the Stairs

instead of the lift.

Stand on One Leg

when putting on your socks in the morning.

Squat Down and Stand Up

when sitting into a chair, rather than falling into it.

Get up Every Hour at Work

and stretch, twist, and walk for a few minutes.

Park Further Away

and walk the extra distance.

Increase outdoor activity

sports, playing with children, walking the dog, anything that gets you moving in natural ways.

RECOVERY RULE

If you cannot recover from a session within twenty-four hours, the intensity or Volume is too high.

If exercise consistently makes you feel worse rather than better, that is your body telling you the dose is wrong.

Two steps forward and three steps back is a sign that demand is exceeding your body's ability to recover. Lower the intensity, increase the rest, and rebuild from a level your body can actually absorb.

**Your body was never broken.
It was healing in the wrong order.**

— Jarrod Cooper, ND
TheHealingHierarchy.com