



Facilitator's Toolkit for

Totsu-totsu Dance



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torindo



Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Government of Japan

Dedication...

*To those living with dementia and the elderly
who danced with us and enriched our
Totsu-totsu Dance over the years;*

to those who are no longer with us;

*and to all the precious care partners who care
so deeply about human connection.*

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>ENCOUNTERS IN PRACTICE</u> | 5 |
| <u>INTRODUCTION</u> | 9 |
| A Journey of Gentle Play | 11 |
| How to use this Toolkit? | 12 |
| <u>ORIGINS</u> | 13 |
| Timeline | 14 |
| The Numbers (as of 2025) | 15 |
| <u>KEY IDEAS & PHILOSOPHY</u> | 16 |
| Core aims | 17 |
| Philosophy | 18 |
| Who is Totsu-totsu Dance for? | 19 |
| <u>SESSION DESIGN</u> | 20 |
| <u>LIBRARY OF ACTIVITIES</u> | 23 |
| ① Breath | 24 |
| ② Distance | 26 |
| ③ Eye Contact | 28 |
| ④ Physical Contact | 30 |
| ⑤ Slow Walking | 32 |
| ⑥ Passing Tissue | 34 |
| ⑦ Sound and Music with Everyday Objects | 36 |
| ⑧ Relational Improvisation | 37 |
| ⑨ Your Own Activity | 38 |
| <u>CONCLUSION</u> | 39 |
| <u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u> | 41 |
| <u>REFERENCES</u> | 42 |
| <u>ABOUT TORINDO</u> | 43 |

ENCOUNTERS IN PRACTICE

Encounters in Practice

Before we get into the philosophy and methodology of *Totsu-totsu Dance (TTD)*, we'd like to share some of the experiences of different people who have experienced *TTD* across different places, times, and moments of practice. They bring together early experiences in care settings, the shifts observed in participants, and the reflections of caregivers, facilitators, and artists who have engaged with the work over periods of time. Each encounter offers a glimpse into how connections were formed, how learning unfolded, and how *TTD* influenced individuals and organisations. Together, they shine a light on the lived texture behind the method, inviting readers to get a sense of what becomes possible through slow attention, shared presence, and gentle movement.



Yukiko Awaji

Graceville Maizuru is a special nursing home in Kyoto Prefecture. It was one of the earliest places in which *TTD* was nurtured. When dancer and choreographer Osamu Jareo began working with residents living with dementia there in 2009, the facility was in the midst of reconsidering its approach to care. Over the next decade, monthly workshops unfolded, involving residents, care staff, and the wider community.

Director Yukiko Awaji reflects:

“At that time, the facility had already gained a reputation as a special nursing home providing good quality care. But I was in a period where I felt unsatisfied and somewhat unfulfilled by that. It was during this time that I encountered Totsu-totsu Dance, and when the first stage performance involving residents was realised, I witnessed the moment when the power of art awakened in them.”

The facility also employs a recreation specialist, separate from the care staff, who participated actively in *TTD* sessions. This role, rare in Japan, continues to support its efforts to enrich daily life for residents. Its presence stands as another quiet shift shaped through years of *TTD* practice.



Osamu Jareo

Over a decade ago, I performed in the dance performance *“Totsu-totsu Dance Part 2: Lessons in Love”* with a woman in her 70s who had been in a wheelchair since her youth due to a chronic illness. She didn’t have dementia, but her body was severely impaired. She could not walk nor move her right hand.

During one rehearsal, I faced her and danced continuously in very close proximity to her. To be precise, I didn't know how to dance with her, as she could barely move anything except her left hand. I felt that the only way to understand her condition and connect with her, even a little, was to stand on one leg. That's the truth of why I was moving like that.

After dancing like that for nearly an hour, she reached out her left hand, grasping her right arm that wouldn't move, and touched the toes of my raised foot. After that dance, the usually quiet woman said, *“Because you kept trying so hard to stand on one leg, I thought I should try too. I tried to use my right hand. It's been fifty years since my right hand touched someone.”*

What exactly was that movement, in which her right hand, which never moved, reached out to touch me? This experience confronted me with fundamental questions – not only about ageing, disability, and dementia, but also about connecting with others, living, and dancing itself.

A year and a half after that performance, she passed away. Though I can no longer dance with her, even now, after her passing, I continue to seek that answer through work and dance with the elderly, not only in Japan but also in Malaysia and Singapore.

Narumi Nakai

Nurse Narumi Nakai worked for many years at Graceville Maizuru and collaborated with Osamu Jareo in developing *TTD*. What began as learning gradually evolved into authorship. Today, at the special nursing home *Shin-ai no ie / Kotobuki-so* in Maizuru City, she designs and facilitates movement-based sessions inspired by *TTD* principles.

She shares:

“The various experiences and insights gained through Totsu-totsu Dance form the core of my current care practice.”

Nakai begins each morning with physical movement activities for residents, many of whom live with dementia. Initially, she led the sessions herself, but over time she shifted toward a practice where residents take turns guiding one another. This quiet reversal of supporting the elderly to lead – instead of following – embodies the spirit of *TTD*: meeting each person as capable, responsive, and able to shape the shared space.





Michael Cheng

When applied drama practitioner and educator Michael Cheng first encountered Totsu-totsu Dance, the activities felt familiar. Some resembled exercises he had seen in community arts contexts: simple, accessible, and easy to follow, and seemingly nothing profound. At the beginning, they appeared almost too straightforward.

With time, his understanding shifted. Through working alongside Osamu Jareo and Megumi Kamimura, he began to appreciate the spirit behind the form. They were generous, grounded, and quietly profound, carrying the work with a sincerity that was felt immediately in the room.

Michael observed their sessions in several senior activity centres. Each time, he was moved by how the participants responded. It was not only the structure of the exercises but the presence of the facilitators that opened something. Seniors would offer a soft glance, a playful grin, a gentle sway of the body, or burst into chatty conversation, as if a door inside them had been quietly unlocked. He began to sense that *TTD* was as much about the inner state of the facilitator as it was about movement or touch.

A visit to Graceville Maizuru in 2025 deepened this impression. The nursing home, facing a small mountain in the quiet countryside, offered him a glimpse of the environment in which *TTD* first took shape. The stillness of the landscape, the rhythm of daily life, and the attentive way staff moved through the space helped him understand the roots of the practice: connection formed through the smallest gestures, meeting another person with openness, and letting the encounter unfold at its own pace.

Cecilia Chan

Dr Cecilia Chan consults for a number of elderly welfare services and facilities. She also founded “Living Beyond Dementia,” a community support group to build an understanding of dementia and provide support for people with dementia, their families and caregivers. She was introduced to Totsu-Totsu Dance during challenging moments of the pandemic lockdown in 2022, a time when isolation weighed heavily and she was desperately searching for meaningful ways to connect with Malaysians living with dementia.

“Through Totsu-Totsu Dance, I have become more playful and aware of how I interact with the person in front of me. I have realized that being present is what truly matters, regardless of whether they’re ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ Thanks to the workshops and interactions over the past three years, healthcare professionals in Malaysia are starting to understand that creative activities like this can help build connections with patients with dementia and improve their care. Totsu-Totsu Dance has started to take root... for a world where we live alongside individuals living with dementia, and I truly feel it is beginning to bloom.”



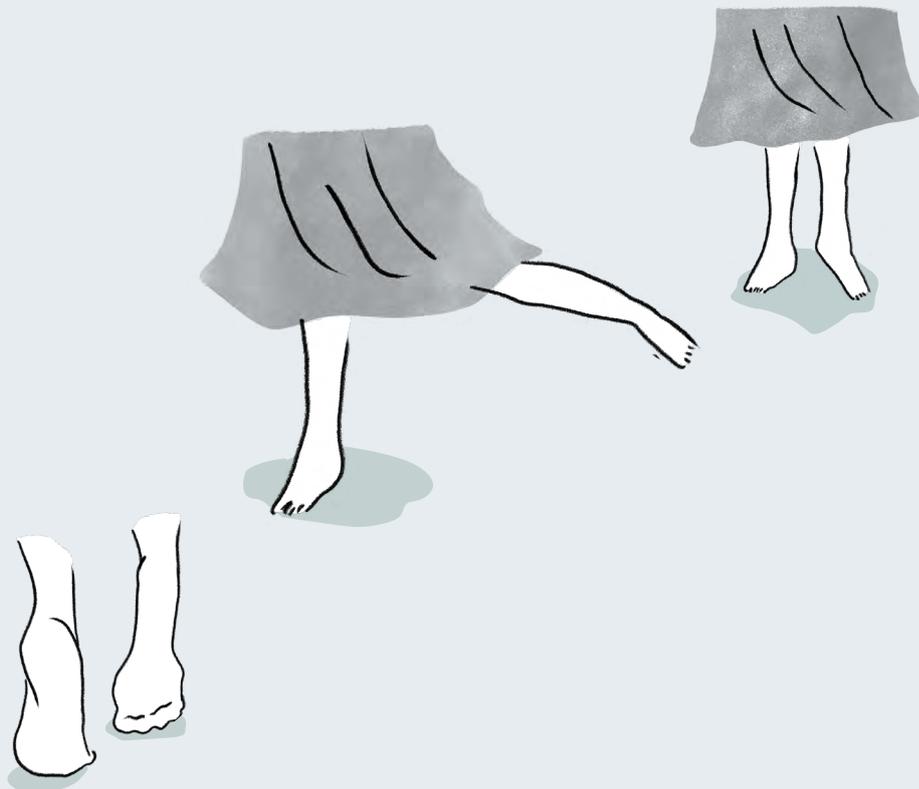
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to the world of *Totsu-totsu Dance (TTD)*.

Step in gently, even playfully. You don't need special shoes. You don't even have to "dance".

There are no established steps or choreography. In fact, here, any movement, or even stillness, can be dance.



Beginning in a nursing home in Japan, *TTD* is a relational activity for CARE. It is a way of being together, of inviting connection without forcing it, and of finding joy in the space between us.

It's about *being with*, sharing breath, distance, eye contact, and sometimes touch. It is a meeting between people. Here, the ordinary becomes expressive, and the hesitant becomes beautiful.

TTD is often soft and quiet, but it also carries a mischievous spark. A playful eyebrow, a teasing pause, or a shared laugh can open unexpected doors. It reminds us that care doesn't have to be serious all the time. Sometimes kindness shows up as humour, curiosity, or a little gentle disruption. The facilitator listens deeply, but also knows when to nudge, to invite surprise, or to break the rhythm so something new can emerge.

A Journey of Gentle Play

This toolkit is an invitation, not an instruction.

Invite people in. Invite yourself in.

Let curiosity lead. Let uncertainty stay.



“I was really amazed to witness how fast Osamu Jareo and his team were able to connect with the persons living with dementia using Totsu-totsu Dance technique and music, and demonstrated connections with them through both physical and non-physical contact, and the effect it has on them.”

MS SERENE TOH, full-time caregiver to her husband who has Alzheimer’s disease

Remember that connection can be discovered through small moments of laughter, through the courage to look silly, or through quiet stillness shared between two people.

As you explore, keep listening to yourself, to others, and to the spaces in between. Be tender, be bold, be playful.

Whether you are a seasoned facilitator, a caregiver, an artist, or someone simply curious, may this toolkit help you build relationships that honour dignity, spark joy, and remind us of our shared humanity.

So... shall we dance?

How to use this Toolkit?

Think of this toolkit as a friendly companion, rather than a training manual. There is no single right way to use it. Open it anywhere. Start with a principle, a story, or an activity that calls to you. Try, adapt, and let your own rhythm guide you.

Inside, you'll find:

- ✿ **Principles** to guide your approach.
- ✿ **Core activities** you can explore, adapt, or reinvent.
- ✿ **Stories and reflections from the field** reminding us that every encounter is unique.
- ✿ **Guidance on safety, consent, and culture**, to help each encounter stay respectful and responsive to those present.

Let this toolkit breathe with you. Use it as a seedbed for your own style, your own pace, your own context.

Let it be your companion for reflection. The pages do not expect perfection, only presence.

Note

New facilitators are strongly encouraged to experience a full *TTD* session before leading one. Being in the room, whether online or in a shared physical space, allows the body to sense the rhythm, the pace, and the quiet invitations that cannot be fully captured on the page. If you wish to join a session or observe one, you may contact torindo (<https://torindo.net/contact/>) to explore possible arrangements. Experiencing the work directly supports a more grounded and compassionate beginning.

ORIGINS

Origins

Before we step into the “how,” it helps to know the “where from.” Every practice has a beginning, and *Totsu-totsu Dance* とつとつダンス (TTD) has its roots in care, community, and curiosity.

Timeline

2009

TTD first came to life in 2009, when Japanese choreographer Osamu Jareo and producer Mariko Mori began experimenting with movement in Graceville Maizuru, a nursing home in Kyoto prefecture. The first workshops were simple yet profound, with elderly residents, caregivers, and local community members moving and being together. From these beginnings, what first seemed like just a dance activity revealed itself as something more, a way of being present with one another through movement, stillness, and breath. The activities continued thereafter with the cooperation and support of the facility. When Japanese arts organisation *torindo* was incorporated in 2012, it continued the work.

2012

Since 2012, the non-profit arts organisation *torindo* has provided a home for this work, nurturing its growth and carrying it into new communities in Japan and beyond. Over the next decade, *TTD* grew steadily, with workshops continuing across Japan, and even finding new life online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2022

In 2022, *TTD* stepped across borders through *Totsu-totsu Dance — Like Art, Like Care*, a Japan-Malaysia collaboration, working with Malaysian artists and Bagan Specialist Centre, and BSC Eldercare Centre. Online and in-person workshops introduced new audiences to its gentle, relational practice.



“We noticed how non-verbal and even non-physical exercises, like when the dance only required participants to maintain eye contact, encouraged new lines of communication. We were also able to witness a marked improvement in the mood of some participants who were having an emotionally tough week.”

BERNARD LIM, Director of Advocacy and Communications, Dementia Singapore.

2023

The following year, *TTD* activities expanded further to Kagoshima and Tokyo, and into Singapore and Malaysia. A highlight came in September 2023 at Our Tampines Hub in Singapore, when persons with dementia and their caregivers danced with live music in an improvised session co-organised with Dementia Singapore. The experience was praised for opening space for non-verbal, deeply personal connection.



2024

In 2024, *TTD* took root more firmly in Singapore through a facilitator training programme, equipping local artists to bring the practice into their own settings. That same year, sessions at a Thye Hua Kwan Active Ageing Centre welcomed seniors and caregivers, showing once again how *TTD* can kindle joy and companionship in everyday spaces.

2025

Most recently, in 2025, *TTD* was featured at the George Town Festival in Penang, Malaysia. Here, performances created with people living with dementia, caregivers, and local artists unfolded on stage, inviting audiences into a tender world where everyday movement became a language of memory, care, and connection. Also in 2025, the *TTD* team led dedicated workshops for clients and care staff of Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital in Singapore.

The Numbers (as of 2025)

Number of facilities which conducted *TTD* workshops

36

Number of workshops

Approximately
450

Number of performances (*Maizuru, Osaka, Tokyo, Sendai, Ipoh, Penang*)

20

Number of participants

More than
5,000

“The process itself is the outcome. It enables internal connections with others and allows us emotional release. This technique is quite rare in Singapore, where results are often prioritized. By shifting the mindset to see the process as the outcome, we can consider how to deeply and effectively integrate this approach into our own dance practice.”

KIMBERLY LONG, dancer and choreographer.

KEY IDEAS & PHILOSOPHY

Key Ideas & Philosophy

Totsu-totsu (とつとつ) is a Japanese word that evokes “faltering,” “wavering,” “slow” or “unsophisticated.” We begin from that spirit of unhurried, tentative, human. In *TTD*, everyday gestures and even stillness are welcomed as dance; the work does not depend on words or virtuosity. It is a way of communicating that treats ordinary movements as meaningful material.



Core aims

- ❁ **Create** a space of dignified care for all.
- ❁ **Support** wellbeing for people with dementia and caregivers.
- ❁ **Strengthen** caregiver and participant relationships.
- ❁ **Explore** and unlock the multiple values of art.

Philosophy

TTD emphasizes **non-verbal connection**, inviting participants to move at their own pace, fostering intimacy without pressure. It's centred on invitation, not instruction, encouraging participants to respond to subtle cues like eye contact or breath.

It seeks to enable **emotional expression and presence**, offering a creative space that reclaims care as a human act, not just a medical one.



❁ Invitation, never imposition

We offer, we wait, we listen. Participation is always a choice. A glance that meets ours, a hand that answers an offered hand – these are our green lights. “No” or “not yet” is a full response, honoured without pressure.’

❁ Mutual respect

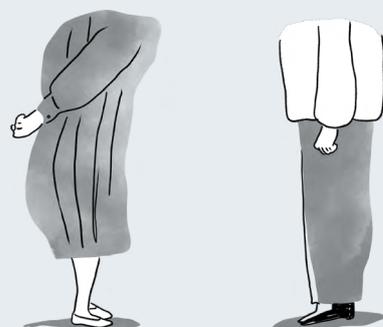
We centre the dignity of everyone present – participants, caregivers, facilitators – treating everyday movement (and stillness) as meaningful. The measure of success is the quality of being together, not the number of activities completed.

❁ Gentle and playful

We approach with curiosity and lightness. The frame is simple so that small discoveries can surface: a shared breath, a sway, a smile. We let play clarify, not demand.

❁ Safety and consent

Touch is optional, specific, and reversible. We move slowly, attuning to micro-responses and cultural context. Proximity can be close without contact; we prioritise comfort, trust, and clear choices.



Who is TTD for?

Envisioned initially for people living with dementia and their caregivers, it is possible for anyone to participate in *TTD*. Children and people with diverse disabilities can take part. Parents and children can dance together. If anyone is ready, anyone can join in.

“Personally it is an interesting experience for me, unlearning our words/ language learnt, to open up to a free, no SOP, no boundary, non-restrictive way to connect and communicate with what we have with our body, with our movements and voices. I remember the last few months of my dad’s life, his most common word used was “mai”, meaning ‘don’t want’ regardless of whether he really meant it or not. Most days he lost the interest and ability to focus on a conversation. We needed to guess and it took much effort to know his real desire or intent. There was a lot of frustration on both sides, as we couldn’t communicate effectively both ways. Totsu-Totsu Dance is a powerful tool to empower us to connect and communicate in the world of dementia and in those with language and cognitive impairment.”

DR HUI LING TAN, Managing Director at Oriental Melaka Straits Medical Centre and Bagan Specialist Centre and Oriental Nilam College of Nursing.

SESSION DESIGN

Session Design

We recommend having two facilitators for a group of about 10 to 20 participants. This can be adjusted according to the needs of the people in the room, as some groups may require more support and attentive presence.

Begin softly. Offer invitations, not instructions. Read consent through small “green lights”: a returned glance, a hand that meets an offered hand, a breath that settles with yours. Keep options visible at every step.



Before you begin, consider tone, space, and pacing

- ❁ **Hold** the room with warmth and patience. Fewer words, slower tempo.
- ❁ **Facilitation** as support, not “steering”. Think about non-directive guidance. Any response is an acceptable response.
- ❁ **Adapt** to culture, room and people. Be gentle, playful, and respectful.



Gentle warm-up (10 minutes)

1. Arrive

Invite everyone to sit or stand comfortably.

Say a few words of welcome and have everyone say their names.

2. Breathe

“Notice your out-breath... let it lengthen.”

If helpful, ask everyone to hum softly on the out-breath.

No action is required. If breathing synchronises, rest there a moment; if not, that’s fine.

3. Gentle stretching

Offer two or three stretches (such as gently rolling the neck or just lifting the arms) for the group to follow.

Invite everyone to each offer a stretch for the group.

Activities (40 minutes)

Refer to the Library of Activities (page 24)

We recommend that you begin with Breath, Distance, Eye Contact and Touch. Do be sensitive to cultural context and the community you are working with, to decide which activity to pick as you proceed.

Affirmation and Closing (10 minutes)

- ❁ Gather the participants in a circle.
- ❁ Give encouragement and affirmation.
- ❁ Make space for them to speak. Prompt, if need be, into how they felt, and what they enjoyed.
- ❁ Try to hear as many voices as time allows.

There have been instances in which participants with dementia did not engage in activities, or left the space during the session. This can and does occasionally happen, depending on their mood or physical condition on a given day. The guiding principle is that if a participant leaves during a session, or chooses not to participate, their preference should be respected and participation not forced.

“What I love about Totsu-Totsu Dance is its freedom. Coming from a theater background, I perceive things differently than those who come from an improv or dance background. I see this as a strength and consider how to leverage it — whether to approach things with a Tetris-like mindset, focusing on results, or more like improv dance.”

KRISHNA GANAPATHI, science teacher and performer in theater and dance.

LIBRARY OF ACTIVITIES

Library of Activities

TTD grows out of small improvisations. Each activity in this library begins with a simple structure, yet what happens inside is shaped by the moment. Improvised movement here is not performance. It is the act of responding to what is present, whether that is a shift in breath, a change in distance, or a gesture from another person. As you work through these activities, allow room for the unexpected. Each variation, pause, or shared glance is already a form of Improvisation.

1 BREATH

Breath is the quiet beginning of *TTD*. It is always present, often unnoticed, and yet it connects us to life and to one another. When we start from breath, we enter gently, without demanding movement or speech.

How to begin

Invite participants to simply notice their breathing. There is no “correct” way to breathe here. The rhythm may be shallow or deep, slow or uneven. Each pattern is accepted as it is. The facilitator may join by bringing attention to their own breath, letting it be visible and audible enough that others may sense it without words.

From here, small variations can emerge:

❁ Shared quiet

Sit together, eyes open or closed, and allow the sound of breathing to fill the space.

❁ Breath with gesture

Place a hand lightly on your own chest or stomach as a visible sign of breath or let your hands float up and down with each inhale and exhale.

❁ Listening breath

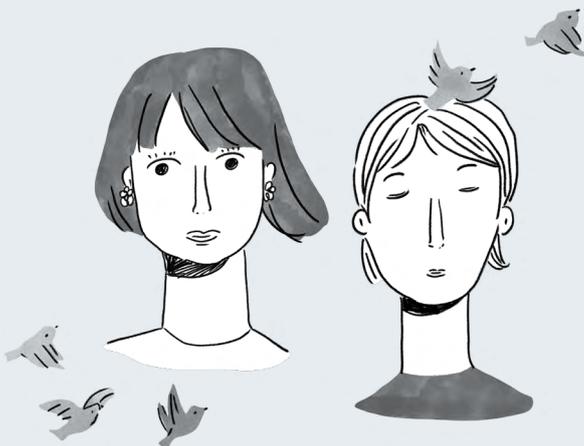
Tune into another’s breathing, not to copy, but to sense its rhythm and respond with your own. Sometimes this creates a subtle meeting, sometimes a contrast.

❁ Breath with sound

Allow a sigh, hum, or soft vowel sound to accompany the out-breath. Notice how tone shifts the atmosphere.

❁ Shared pause

After an exhale, rest in stillness before the next inhale. Invite the possibility of pausing together without forcing it.





Relational quality

Working with breath is not about synchronising or controlling. Sometimes breath will meet; sometimes it will not. Both are part of the dance. What matters is the awareness of sharing space, alive to the presence of another. These moments already contain small improvisations, shaped by each person's breath and timing.

Facilitator's stance

Hold the space lightly. Wait more than you act. Breath can be fragile; it carries histories of illness, age, and emotion. Allow silences. Allow irregularities. A cough, a sigh, or even holding the breath are also forms of expression.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ **Breath work may bring comfort or discomfort. Always leave room for withdrawal; not everyone will want to have their breathing observed. Keep a soft awareness of distance. Too close may feel intrusive, too far and the connection may be lost.**
- ▶ **Remember that in *TTD*, breath itself is already dance. No extra layer is required.**
- ▶ **Breath, in this way, becomes the foundation for *TTD*. It reminds us that to be together does not always mean to move. Sometimes, it means simply to breathe in the same room, and to recognise the dignity of that shared experience.**

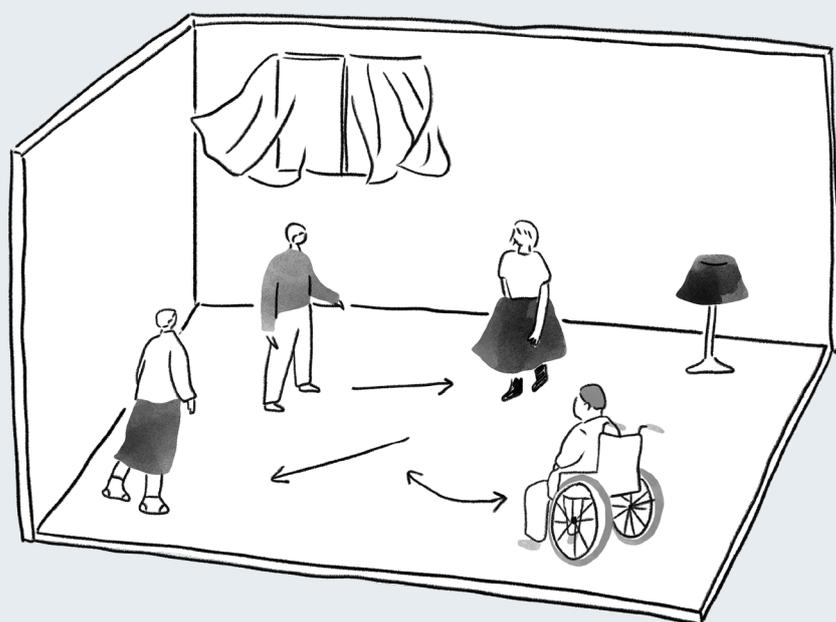
2 DISTANCE

Distance is how we meet and how we honour space.

In *TTD*, distance is not only physical but also relational. Nearness and apartness both carry meaning. By attending to distance, we notice how closeness can bring comfort or tension, and how space can hold connection even without touch.

How to begin

Invite participants to explore where they place themselves in relation to another. This does not need explanation. Simply walk, sit, or stand in the room, and notice how distance shifts the emotion between people. The facilitator may model by slowly approaching, pausing, or stepping back, allowing the other to respond freely.



From here, small variations can emerge:

❁ Walking near and far

Move slowly around the space, sometimes close to another, sometimes further away. Notice how the air between you and the participant changes.

❁ Diagonal encounter

Stand at a diagonal from another person, not face to face, not side by side. Sense the tension and possibility in this angle.

❁ Parallel presence

Sit or stand beside someone, sharing

direction without contact. Feel what it is like to “be next to” rather than “with.”

❁ Approach and retreat

Take a few steps towards someone, then gently step back. Let this rhythm create its own dialogue.

❁ Shared horizon

Both look outwards, standing at a distance, as if gazing together at the same view. Connection can exist even when eyes do not meet.

Relational quality

Distance allows freedom. It affirms that being together does not always mean being close. Sometimes space itself offers dignity and ease. A large gap can still be full of presence; a small gap can create intimacy or unease. Both are part of the dance. The choices of how and when to move closer or further are themselves improvised and unplanned.

Facilitator's stance

Guide with patience. Let participants choose the distance they are comfortable with. Watch carefully for subtle cues (stepping back, leaning forward, stillness) that signal readiness or hesitation. Do not rush to close space; allow distance to speak.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ **Be sensitive to cultural norms: what feels safe distance in one context may feel too close or too distant in another.**
- ▶ **Consent applies here as much as with touch. Never assume someone wants you nearer.**
- ▶ **Remember that distance is not absence. Being apart can also be connection.**
- ▶ **This activity doesn't always have to be gentle and quiet. Remember *TTD* is also sometimes playful and mischievous.**
- ▶ **Distance, in this way, becomes part of the language of *TTD*. It reminds us that relationships are not only about touch or words, but about how we move in relation to each other, finding dignity in the space between.**

3 EYE CONTACT

Eye contact is often the moment where encounter begins. In *TTD*, a glance that is met, or not met, is already part of the dance. The eyes can invite, hold, or release connection. Looking is never forced. Sometimes it is brief, sometimes sustained, sometimes avoided. All are valid.

How to begin

Invite participants simply to look around the room. There is no instruction to “find” another’s eyes. There is only an invitation to notice what happens when eyes meet, and what happens when they do not. The facilitator may model by resting their gaze gently, waiting for a natural meeting. No dialogue is really necessary.

From here, small variations can emerge:



❁ Passing glance

Walk slowly and let your eyes meet another’s for just a moment, then continue moving.

❁ Sustained gaze

Sit opposite someone and allow your eyes to rest on theirs for as long as is comfortable. Either may look away at any time.

❁ Soft focus

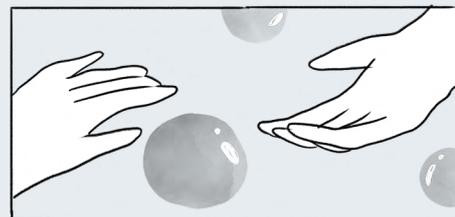
Let your gaze settle not directly on the eyes, but nearby, for instance, the forehead, the cheek, or even the space between. Notice how connection changes when it is less direct.

❁ Eyes and movement

Begin a small movement (a hand rising, a shift in weight) and let it be guided by the moment of eye contact.

❁ Closing and opening

Close your eyes for a few breaths, then open them again to meet the room. Notice the difference when sight returns.



Relational quality

Eye contact can awaken a sense of intimacy, recognition, or even vulnerability. It is both powerful and fragile. In *TTD*, it is never about staring or demanding. Averted eyes can speak just as clearly as a steady gaze. Each choice is honoured. Every meeting or soft refusal of eye contact becomes a tiny improvised moment of connection.

Facilitator's stance

Offer reassurance through your own soft, unhurried, and open gaze. Watch for discomfort and release the invitation if eyes turn away. Respect avoidance as a full response. Sometimes looking together outwards, at the same object or direction, is more comfortable than looking into each other's eyes.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ **Prolonged eye contact can feel intense; encourage participants to rest their gaze elsewhere whenever they need to.**
- ▶ **Some may find direct eye contact uncomfortable or emotionally confronting. Provide alternatives such as shared outward gazing.**
- ▶ **Eye contact is not required; absence of gaze can also be connection. Eye contact, in this way, becomes a subtle dance of approach and retreat. It reminds us that to meet another does not always require words or touch. A glance, or the choice not to glance, can be enough to affirm presence and dignity.**

4 PHYSICAL CONTACT

Physical contact, or touch, is the most delicate of the four elements. It can comfort, reassure, or awaken memories. It can also feel intrusive if uninvited. In *TTD*, touch is always optional, specific, and reversible. A hand offered and not taken is as valid as one that meets.

How to begin

Invite participants to become aware of their own sense of touch – the feel of the chair beneath them, their feet on the ground, their hands resting on their lap. From this awareness, touch may be offered gently. The facilitator might extend a hand, palm up, and simply wait. Both acceptance and refusal are part of the dance.

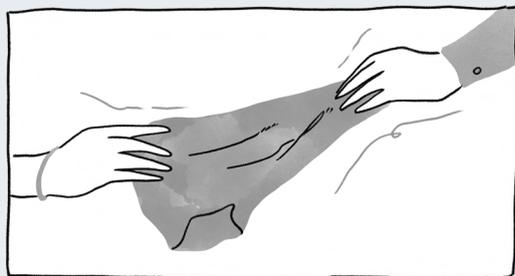
From here, small variations can emerge:

❁ Hand to hand

One person offers a hand, the other chooses whether to place theirs upon it. The hands may rest together in stillness or shift lightly.

❁ Shoulder or back

With clear invitation, a hand may rest briefly on another's shoulder or back and be removed just as gently.



❁ Touch and release

Meet through touch, then slowly let go. Notice how the connection lingers even after separation.

❁ Object as bridge

Hold the same object (a scarf, a cushion, a piece of cloth) together, letting it carry the sense of contact.

❁ Imagined touch

Without actual contact, extend a hand towards another as if about to touch, then pause in the space just before meeting. The possibility itself is expressive.

Relational quality

Touch in *TTD* is never about control. It is about offering and receiving. A brief touch can carry warmth and acknowledgement; the refusal of touch can also carry dignity. Both are important. The timing of offering and receiving touch is always improvised, guided by the other person's responses.

Facilitator's stance

Approach touch with utmost care. Demonstrate slowness and clarity. Read the small signals: a leaning in, a hesitation, a hand withdrawn. Accept "no" without question. Celebrate the moments when touch occurs, and the moments when it does not.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ Touch may hold different meanings across cultures, genders, and relationships; always respect these differences.
- ▶ Consent is ongoing. Even if touch is accepted once, it may not be wanted the next time.
- ▶ Use objects or gestures as alternatives for those who prefer not to engage in physical touch.
- ▶ Remember that not touching can be as powerful as touching.
- ▶ Touch, in this way, becomes a quiet conversation between bodies. It reminds us that care is not about taking but about offering, with the freedom for the other to answer in their own way.

"...what makes Totsu-Totsu Dance most compelling is the fact that people with different motivations and backgrounds keep it going together. It's not strictly caregiving, nor just dance art. I think it's okay to see it as a phenomenon called Totsu-Totsu Dance and to approach it with curiosity and openness, inviting others to join in."

MEGUMI KAMIMURA, choreographer, dancer and facilitator.

5 SLOW WALKING

Walking brings the dance into motion. In *TTD*, walking is slowed down, pared back, and treated as a form of presence rather than exercise. Each step becomes an opportunity to sense the ground, the air, and the company of others.

How to begin

Invite participants to walk slowly through the space. The pace is much slower than usual, almost to the point of hesitation. Encourage awareness of the soles of the feet, the shifting of weight, the small changes in balance.

From here, small variations can emerge:



❁ Slow walk

Walk in silence, letting each step land with full attention.

❁ Paired walking

Two people walk side by side, matching or contrasting pace, without the need for words.

❁ Crossing paths

Move through the space and notice the moments when paths intersect. A glance or a pause may accompany the crossing.

❁ Diagonal walking

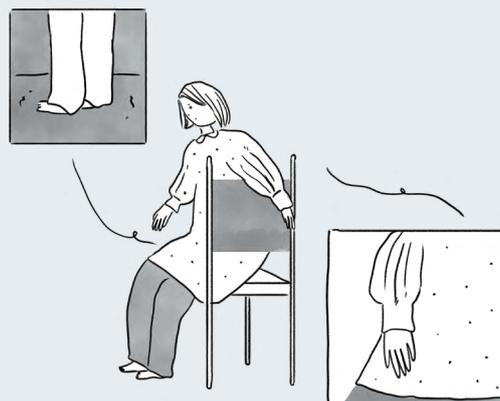
Approach another person not directly, but on a diagonal line. Sense the subtle tension this creates.

❁ Shared pause

At times, stop together, letting stillness be part of the walk.

❁ For seated participants, suggest a micro-sway.

Name simple sensations (feet, hands, shoulders) to invite noticing rather than effort.



Relational quality

Walking in this way shifts an everyday act into a shared exploration. The slowness creates room for connection, through parallel pacing, mirrored rhythms, or simply the awareness of being in motion together. Even when paths diverge, the sense of relation lingers. As paths cross or drift apart, walking becomes a shared improvisation that needs no instruction.

Facilitator's stance

Keep the frame simple. Model slowness without exaggeration. Allow different speeds to exist; some may move more quickly, some more hesitantly. Avoid correction. What matters is not uniformity but the quality of being alongside. Build awareness of self, of the space, and of one another.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ For some, very slow walking may bring discomfort in the body. Invite participants to find their own sustainable pace.
- ▶ Ensure the space is clear and safe for movement, especially for those with mobility concerns.
- ▶ Walking can be tiring; offer breaks and chairs nearby.
- ▶ Walking, in this way, turns the most ordinary act into a gentle dance. Each step becomes both personal and shared, reminding us that moving through the world together can be as simple, and as profound, as taking a walk.

“...it is the uniquely personal exchange between participants using the Totsu Totsu’s approach, which utilises the principles of improvisation, that opens the door to possibly finding deeper connections. It utilises elements of trust building exercises to help facilitate a more intimate channel of communication, verbal and non-verbal. With no wrong or right steps or set moves to memorise, it leaves participants open to discovering new ways to connect, and that is particularly beneficial when dealing with the uncertainties and anxieties persons with dementia may face.”

DR CHEN SHILING, Board Member, Dementia Singapore.

6 PASSING TISSUE

A simple piece of tissue becomes a playful partner. Because it is light and fragile, it responds to the smallest movement of air, hand, or body. Passing it around without using the fingers invites creativity, slowness, and shared attention.

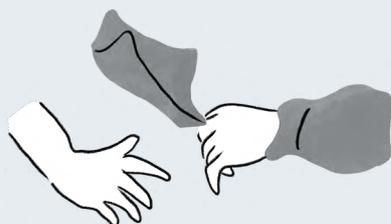
How to begin

Place a tissue gently on the back of your hand. Instead of gripping it, balance it there and pass it on by moving your hand close to another's arm, hand, or shoulder. The next person catches it not with fingers, but by offering a surface for the tissue to land.

From here, small variations can emerge:

❁ Increasing challenge

Begin with the back of the hand, then try the arm, shoulder, or even the head. Each surface changes the game.



❁ Air catch

Lift the tissue up, release it into the air, and let another person catch it on their body.

❁ Carer and participant

Two people play together, passing the tissue back and forth at their own pace.

❁ Whole group play

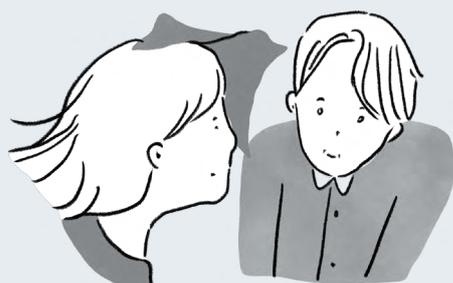
The tissue moves around a circle, or drifts freely in a larger group, each person ready to catch.

❁ Multiple tissues

Add a second or third tissue for a playful challenge.

❁ Creative play

Explore other possibilities: blowing gently to move the tissue, fanning with the hand, or letting it float like a small kite.



Relational quality

The tissue highlights gentleness. Because it tears or drifts easily, participants must slow down and adjust to one another. Passing becomes less about success and more about noticing small gestures like how a hand lifts, how air moves, how two people meet in timing. New possibilities often appear on their own, turning the simple act of passing into improvised play.

Facilitator's stance

Keep the activity light and playful. Celebrate small successes, such as a tissue balanced for a few seconds or a surprising catch. Allow laughter and imperfection! If the tissue falls, that too is part of the dance. Offer encouragement rather than instruction.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ **Some may find balancing tricky; model patience and remind participants that dropping is part of the fun.**
- ▶ **Tissue is fragile. Use it to invite care and delicacy rather than competition.**
- ▶ **No larger groups, ensure everyone has a chance to join; multiple tissues can help.**
- ▶ **For participants with limited mobility, adapt by placing the tissue on parts of the body they can move comfortably.**
- ▶ **A tissue, in this way, becomes a medium for gentle play. It transforms an everyday object into dance, reminding us that connection can be found in the smallest acts of balance, release, and shared timing.**

7 SOUND AND MUSIC WITH EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Sound draws us into rhythm and play. When created with ordinary objects, it becomes accessible to everyone. No instruments are needed. A tap, a rustle, a hum can become music. In *TTD*, these sounds are not about performance but about listening and responding together.

How to begin

Invite participants to notice sounds already present, for example, the shuffle of feet, the rustle of clothes, the sound of breath. Then introduce simple everyday objects: a cup, a piece of cloth, a spoon, or a sheet of paper. Encourage exploration: tap, shake, blow, crumple. Each sound can be a starting point for movement or stillness.

From here, small variations can emerge:

❁ Angle and Distance

Move the items to vary angle and distance, so that the participant is also moving to make the sound.

❁ Solo exploration

One person experiments with the sounds of an object while others listen.

❁ Echo and response

A participant makes a sound; another replies with the same or a contrasting one.

❁ Layered rhythm

In a group, each person chooses one sound. Together, the room fills with a soft orchestra of ordinary things.

❁ Sound and movement

Link a sound with a gesture: a clap with a step, a rustle with a sway.

❁ Breath as music

Add sighs, hums, or whistles, blending voice with objects.

❁ Passing the sound

Begin with one sound and “pass” it around the group, each person repeating or transforming it before handing it on.



Relational quality

Everyday sounds create a level field. There is no “right note” or “wrong rhythm.” A small sound, even hesitant, can carry connection. Listening becomes as important as making noise. The pauses and silences are part of the music. Allow sounds to shift and change as people respond to each other. The music that emerges is improvised in the moment.

Facilitator’s stance

Encourage curiosity. Model gentleness rather than loudness. Invite participants to notice how sounds affect the group. For instance, does it draw laughter, quiet, energy, or calm? Allow both chaos and order; a jumble of sounds may gradually find its own rhythm.



THINGS TO NOTE

- ▶ **Some participants may be sensitive to sudden loud sounds; set a frame of gentleness.**
- ▶ **Objects should be safe, light, and familiar. Avoid anything sharp or heavy.**
- ▶ **Not everyone needs to create sound at the same time; some may prefer to listen or join later.**
- ▶ **Remember that silence is also part of sound work. Honour the moments of quiet.**
Sound, in this way, becomes a form of dance. By using the simplest materials at hand, we create a shared music that values presence over skill, and listening over performance.

8 RELATIONAL IMPROVISATION

This is not a new activity. It is a reminder that the earlier activities can come together and deepen through shared exploration. Each activity on its own can become a dance. Improvising with all or only a few of the elements can create a shared movement that reflects the moment. Relational improvisation describes what appears when people respond to one another with curiosity, awareness, and care. Nothing needs to be taught as a separate sequence. It is simply what unfolds when the work is allowed to meet and grow naturally.

9 YOUR OWN ACTIVITY

This page is left open for you.

TTD continues to grow through the people who practise it. Each place, each group, and each meeting offers new discoveries. You may find that something emerges in the session, such as an action, an image, or a small sound. If it feels right and brings connection, it belongs here.

The toolkit grows through your curiosity.

What begins as a small experiment may become part of someone else's practice.

Add your ideas, adapt what you find, and continue to listen.

The spirit of *TTD* is to keep wondering, keep trying, and keep creating with the people in front of you.



CONCLUSION

Conclusion

As this toolkit comes to a close, may it serve as a steady companion for those who choose to step into the quiet, attentive world of *TTD*. What began in nursing homes and community rooms continues to grow through each facilitator who chooses to meet another person with patience, curiosity, and respect.

The practices here invite you to slow down, listen with your whole body, and create moments of connection that honour the dignity of everyone present. Carry what is useful, adapt what you need, and let your own encounters shape the next steps.

The dance continues each time you enter a space with openness, care, and the courage to move gently with another.

“Totsu-Totsu Dance’s greatest strength is that it doesn’t aim for a specific goal. Many treatments have predetermined objectives, but in reality, we often don’t know what will work until we try, especially for individuals living with dementia. It is not ideal to only use treatments that have proven to show results. If we can introduce more open-ended approaches and treatments like Totsu-Totsu Dance, we could provide a healthier balance for patients.”

JAMIE BUITELAR, speech and drama practitioner and Co-founder of early-onset dementia advocacy group, Dementia & Co.

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About torindo

The General Incorporated Association torindo was established in February 2012 as a non-profit organization with the aim of promoting culture and the arts, and revitalizing communities and regions through artistic activities. The organization was founded based on the activities of the collaborative art project “*Maizuru RB,*” which was carried out in Maizuru City from fiscal year 2009 to 2011 through cooperation between Maizuru City and the NPO, Akaren-ga Club Maizuru.

torindo has planned and managed a variety of art projects in collaboration with local residents and municipal governments, including “*Maizuru RB,*” the “*A Seed is a Ship*” project, and “*Totsu-Totsu Dance.*” These projects have been conducted in areas such as Maizuru City in Kyoto Prefecture, Saitama City in Saitama Prefecture, and Toyooka City in Hyogo Prefecture, as well as in Malaysia and Singapore. The organization also produces, manages, and coordinates a wide range of exhibitions and stage performances that cross disciplinary boundaries.

<https://torindo.net/about/>

