

Lesson 7 – The Geriatric Experience



Lesson Overview

The lesson will give participants a fully immersive geriatric experience. By ‘walking in the shoes’ of an older adult, participants will increase their understanding and gain empathy for the physical changes that occur as we age.

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Experience physical changes due to aging
- Understand what it means to be empathetic
- Increase empathy and understanding of what it is like to age and the impact it has on daily life

Lesson at a Glance

Activity	Materials	Preparation	Approximate class time
FOCUS	• PowerPoint Presentations Slide 24 • <i>Empathy Self-Assessment</i>	1. Prepare to show Presentation Slide 2. Print/photocopy the <i>Empathy Self-Assessment</i> (one per participant)	10 minutes
LEARN	• Safety Information found in curriculum • <i>RealCare Geriatric Simulator</i> • Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses • Walker or cane (optional) • <i>The Geriatric Experience Checklist</i> • Props for geriatric experience (pill bottle, pen, paper, button-down shirt, glass or water and pitcher, chair, cell phone, newspaper, jacket, comb, belt, coins)	1. Find the props for simulation activities 2. Have the <i>Geriatric Simulator</i> ready to use 3. Have the Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses ready to use 4. Print/photocopy <i>The Geriatric Experience Checklist</i> (one per participant)	30-90 minutes
REVIEW	• <i>Reflection Rubric</i>	1. Print/photocopy the <i>Reflection Rubric</i> (one per participant)	30-45 minutes

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FOCUS: Empathy and Respect for Older Adults

10 minutes

Purpose:

Society today is very focused on youth. There are many misconceptions as well as negative stereotypes and beliefs that need to be overcome. This activity will help participants understand what empathy is and how they can become more empathetic towards older adults. This is especially important as it applies to geriatric patients.

Materials:

- PowerPoint Presentation Slide 24
- *Empathy Self-Assessment*

Facilitation Steps:

1. Show Presentation Slide 24. Define empathy as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
2. Give participants the *Empathy Self-Assessment*. Give them 5 minutes to complete it. Let them know that the answers are confidential. It is meant as a tool to reflect on how empathetic they are and identify areas they may wish to improve upon.
3. The more ‘yes’ answers that were chosen by the participant, the more characteristics they have as an empathetic person.

Empathy Self-Assessment

Take this self-assessment and decide for yourself if you need to improve.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I have a general interest in the welfare of other people. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I have a warm personality. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am flexible when dealing with situations. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am alert and can pick up on how others are feeling. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am able to listen objectively to other people. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am able to cope with egocentric personalities. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am sought after by other people to listen to anxieties and fears. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | My friends would not call me self-absorbed. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am able to focus on the person who I am speaking with without getting distracted. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I understand the difference between sympathy and empathy. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I have a variety of life experiences that help me have a broad understanding of people. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | Others see me as adaptable, flexible, and spontaneous. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am able to maintain my own health and don't get wrapped up in other people's problems. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | I am patient and kind. |
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | Others would describe me as humble, not conceited. |

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LEARN: The Geriatric Simulation Experience

30-90 minutes

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to have participants wear the *RealCare Geriatric Simulator* to experience a fully immersive geriatric experience.

Materials:

- RealCare Geriatric Simulator
- Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses
- Walker
- Props for simulation tasks: (pill bottle, pen, paper, button-down shirt, glass or water and pitcher, chair, cell phone, newspaper, jacket, comb, belt, coins)

Facilitation Steps:

1. Explain to participants that today they are going to have a fully immersive experience about what it feels like to age. Have the RealCare Geriatric Simulator ready to wear. Review the safety information found in the Introduction with the participants.
2. Ask participants if they have any questions or concerns regarding how to safely wear and move in the RealCare Geriatric Simulator.
3. Instructor note: The RealCare Geriatric Simulator has been expertly designed so that the person wearing the garment may experience many of the effects of aging. Participants may be surprised at the physical sensations they feel. Participants need to follow directions carefully as they use the simulator to best understand the physical changes and challenges the aging body goes through.
4. Demonstrate the features of the RealCare Geriatric Simulator by choosing a participant to wear the Simulator while you point out the features.
5. The Geriatric Sensitivity Simulation Experience: If you only have one Geriatric Simulator, you will have to allow for enough time or class periods to rotate through the experience. Or you may wish to set up a station somewhere in the room where students can go in pairs to complete the experience.
6. Give each participant *The Geriatric Experience Checklist*. Have participants work in pairs. One will assist the other into the suit. Both participants should have the opportunity to wear the complete suit and complete all of the tasks on the list.



Instructions for Use



1. Check the contents of the package to ensure that every piece listed is included.
2. Work with a partner for assistance in putting on the RealCare Geriatric Simulator.



Ankle weights

3. Put one ankle weight on each ankle.
Secure them tightly around each ankle.



Weight vest

4. With assistance from a partner, put the weight vest on. Adjust the Velcro straps until it is a secure fit.



Knee restraint

5. Put one knee restraint on each knee.
Pull them tightly for a snug fit.



Elbow restraint

6. Put one elbow restraint on each elbow.
Pull them tightly for a snug fit.



Cervical collar

7. Put the cervical collar around your neck. Strap it tightly enough so it is secure without cutting off circulation or air flow.



Wrist weights

8. Put one wrist weight on each wrist. Some users might prefer to add one more weight per wrist for a fuller simulation effect. Pull tightly for a snug fit.



Gloves

9. Pull the gloves tightly over each hand.



Visual impairment glasses

10. Choose the visual impairment glasses you desire and put them on.

Walker

11. Unfold the walker and adjust it to the proper height.



Geriatric Experience Checklist

Instructions: Do each task while wearing the Geriatric Simulator. Record your observations.

Task	Rating of difficulty to complete the task 1(easy) – 5 (hard)					What did you observe about your body as you completed the task?
	1	2	3	4	5	
Open a pill bottle						
Sign your name with a pen						
Walk up & down stairs (with walker or cane if available)						
Button a shirt						
Pour a glass of water from a pitcher						
Stand up and sit down on a chair						
Pick up and count 5 coins						

The Geriatric Experience Checklist (page 2)

Instructions: Do each task while wearing the Geriatric Simulator. Record your observations.

Task	Rating of difficulty to complete the task 1(easy) – 5 (hard)					What did you observe about your body as you completed the task?
	1	2	3	4	5	
Tie your shoes						
Use a cell phone						
Read a newspaper						
Open a door						
Put on a jacket						
Comb your hair						
Put on a belt						

Lesson 7 – The Geriatric Experience

REVIEW: Reflection

30-45 minutes

Purpose:

Participants will reflect on how the simulation experience has changed the way they see and feel about older adults.

- I learned that sensitive and empathetic caregivers need to have these ATTITUDES....

Materials:

- *Reflection Rubric*

3. Use the rubric to rate your reflection assignment before you submit your work.

Facilitation Steps:

1. Meaningful reflection can help participants gather and express their thoughts about the challenges of aging as well as the challenges of responsible and empathetic caregiving for geriatric patients in healthcare occupations. Responses will provide feedback on what you learned about the realities of aging and your changes in empathy and understanding for older adults.
2. Choose one of the following statements about being an empathetic caregiver for geriatric patients and create an essay, poster, poem, or written project to express what you have learned:
 - I learned that sensitive and empathetic caregivers need to have KNOWLEDGE ABOUT...
 - I learned that sensitive and empathetic caregivers need to have these SKILLS....
 - I learned that these PERSONAL LIFE SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES can help a caregiver to be sensitive and empathetic.....



The Geriatric Experience Reflection Rubric

	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Content The extent that the project shows understanding of what it is like to be an aging adult and the challenges of caring for a geriatric patient	Shows insightful comprehension for the scope of skills, attitudes, or situational factors that influence the ability to be a geriatric caregiver (12 points)	Shows basic comprehension for the scope of skills, attitudes or situational factors that influence the ability to be a geriatric caregiver (9 points)	Shows gaps in comprehension for the scope of skills, attitudes, or situational factors that influence the ability to be a geriatric caregiver (6 points)	Shows no relationship to the questions (3 points)
Personal reflection The extent that the project shows sincere understanding and empathy for care giving is personalized	Makes insightful connections to own personal life (8 points)	Shows literal personalization (6 points)	Shows a developing ability to personalize (4 points)	Makes few, if any, connections to own personal life (2 points)
Organization of ideas and design	Logical, coherent progression of ideas (4 points)	Generally focused, with clear attempt at organization (3 points)	Some organization, but disjointed ideas (2 points)	Little or no organization (1 point)
Use of language	Use of language enhances reader's ability to understand through sophistication and elaboration (4 points)	Use of language facilitates (allows) reader's understanding (3 points)	Use of language is distracting but does not interfere with understanding (2 points)	Use of language interferes with understanding (1 point)
Total Points				

Total Points _____ /28 = _____ %

