



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

PLAYGROUPS FOR ALL AGES

A handbook for understanding and
implementing intergenerational playgroups
for wellbeing





With thanks to our facilitators: Tracey Fredericks (Exercise Physiologist), Annie O'Sullivan (Early Childhood Educator) and Ali Blacklaw (Artist and Art Educator)

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PART 1 - The what and why of intergenerational playgroups (IGPs)



Introduction to the context

In the context of increasing urbanisation, rapid technological change, climate change, and ongoing complexities related to health, one of our greatest challenges is ensuring that our aging population lives well, and that all children experience the best start to life. These challenges relate not only to health, the economy and the environment, they are also deeply social. And despite digital technologies affording greater connection than ever, we live in a time of increasing loneliness, and reduced opportunities for building the social capital, trust and respect needed for social cohesion.

Loneliness and disconnectedness are an increasing experience for elderly people, particularly those with conditions such as dementia (Casey, Low, Jeon & Brodaty 2016). But it is not only the elderly who increasingly live alone or are segregated from community life in aged care homes. Disconnection is an increasing phenomenon in young people, parents, and their children.

Some remedy to the problems of loneliness in the elderly and the challenges of supporting the development of young children lies in the building of connections between and across generations (Kalache, 2013, Whitehouse and George 2018). In fact, at the University of Wollongong (UOW) we believe a positive ‘Early Start’ for those in their early years and a ‘Strong Finish’ for our elders are deeply interconnected. Theories of human development remind us that contact between generations is important for the passing on of cultural values, traditions, and skills vital to the wellbeing of young people and their capacities to make strong contributions to society (Vygotsky, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Older people play a critical role in the psychosocial development of children and young people. They have the time to invest in relationships build trust, that develop role identities, and offer a sense of place beyond immediate family groupings. Intergenerational connections can also help older people maintain a sense of their life as meaningful and sustains their hope in the future (Erikson,

1994). Contact between generations provides opportunities to build the knowledge, trust and mutual recognition that builds social capital and cohesion (Allport, 1979).

Intergenerational Playgroups (IGPs) offer one way to facilitate interactions for developing wellbeing between young and old, including people with dementia (Phillipson & Johnson 2018). Indeed, Baker and colleagues (2017) found that well-designed play programs can offer valuable experiences that can enhance quality of life and offer physical, social, emotional, and cognitive benefits for all participants.

Play Connections, within the ‘Connections for Life with Dementia’ research project at the University of Wollongong (UOW, 2020), brought together a unique interdisciplinary team to build the evidence base for supported play groups for people with, or at risk of dementia, children (birth to five years) and their parents/ carers in both early learning and aged care settings. The study explored interactions that take place in these settings to understand how different aspects of the environment and supported facilitation can improve wellbeing. The interactions were informed by and examined through The Five Ways to Wellbeing framework: connecting, learning, giving, taking notice, and being active (Aked et al., 2008). Unique to the Play Connections project was that the IGPs would be held in a space designed specifically for children rather than an aged care facility.

In preparing for our IGPs, the Play Connections research team collaborated throughout 2019 and 2020 with Playgroup NSW, the IRT Foundation and expert facilitators to identify design principles in existing playgroups. Video ethnography, observational and survey research with existing playgroups in residential aged care settings were used to inform initial design principles.

These initial principles were tested during Intergenerational Play Dates hosted at the UOW Early Start Playful Learning Space. Since this was the first time a dedicated program targeting

older people was hosted in the UOW facility, an environmental audit was undertaken against dementia design principles for public buildings (Fleming et al 2017).

The audit informed subsequent modifications to signage, human resources and furniture to enable the participation of people with dementia and young families. Our Intergenerational Play Dates focused the ways different activities facilitated by experts (e.g., music, movement, and art therapy) promote The Five Ways to Wellbeing (Aked et al., 2008) for all participants. The resultant work of the Play Connections team is an Intergenerational Playgroup Pedagogical Framework designed to inform practitioner implementation of IGPs in a range of spaces and places. The Intergenerational Playgroup Pedagogical Framework is shared and unpacked through a range of rich experiences in this text, ‘A handbook for understanding and implementing intergenerational playgroups for wellbeing’.

The value of adult-child play

Play is a powerful medium for learning across all ages over the life span as it encourages the development of socialisation, imagination, emotions, and cognition in a stress-free and enjoyable environment (Sutton-Smith, 2009). Play is considered central to the social and emotional experiences of young children that form the necessary foundations for their personal development and wellbeing. While engaging in play, children acquire the foundations of self-reflection, develop communication skills, learn to manage their emotions, and explore the roles and rules of functioning in adult society (Vygotsky, 1978). Acting in an imaginary situation with others constitutes the basis for the child’s awareness of the world around them and raises their cognition of reality to a more complex and generalised level.

The role of adults as early childhood educators, family, and community members, is important in extending children’s play to enhance its effects (Fleer, 2014). The theories of social constructivism recognise the importance of social interactions where adults carefully guide (or “scaffold”) children’s play and extend it

to wider contexts by sharing their knowledge, experience, and expertise (Vygotsky, 1978). In this relationship children are active participants and decision makers where educators support their agency by encouraging them to “make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world,” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 45).

The pedagogies of social constructivists view learning as a co-construction of meaning where children and adults work together and share their perspectives to negotiate an understanding of the world (Palincsar, 2005). Social constructivist pedagogy supports the idea that the social and individual processes of learning are interwoven and supported in intergenerational play.

By playing together with children, adults share their life experiences and extensive knowledge, which can help children to extend and enrich their play beyond the level that children can achieve on their own (known as ‘scaffolding’, Palincsar, 2005). The ecological model of human development, which is largely consistent with social constructivist pedagogy, positions the person’s life trajectories within multiple layers of social and cultural contexts of the place and time they live in (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Play has been traditionally associated with young children, though it can also be an engaging, fun and safe activity for older people (Leigh & Kinder, 1999; Holzman, 2009). Whilst play can be stigmatised as childish, playing together with children provides a supportive context for benefitting from play in later life and contributing to their wellbeing. For older adults, play also promotes health and wellbeing by providing the opportunities to develop relationships and experience positive emotions (Agate et al., 2018). This is especially so when the context of play is perceived as supporting social connectedness, promoting self-growth, and providing an opportunity to contribute to society (de Schutter & Abeele 2010).

Towards pedagogies of intergenerational play

Providing the space and time for bringing younger and older generations together is a necessary step towards building intergenerational connections. However, simple contact might not necessarily lead to positive contact experiences necessary for the participants' wellbeing (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The notion too, that parent-led child centred playgroup practices can be simply transferred into an aged care context without reflection on the underlying principles needs review.

In Australia, some substantial research is underway to develop a pedagogy for intergenerational care (Cartmel et al., 2018). We propose there is a simultaneous need for a theoretical and empirical base for a pedagogy of intergenerational play. In response, and in partnership with Playgroup NSW (PGNSW) and an aged care provider (IRT) our program prioritised the development of a relational and intentional pedagogy, informed by the Five Ways to Wellbeing (Aked et al., 2008).

Pedagogy is an “encompassing term concerned with what a teacher does to influence learning in others,” (Child Australia, 2017). Whilst not strictly an educational context, articulation of a pedagogy for facilitated intergenerational play is an important condition for understanding how specific intended outcomes can be achieved in a particular set of practices that are offered to the participants of IGPs.

The notion of intentional pedagogy (Hamre et al., 2012) is used to emphasise the pedagogical intentions of the activities planned for the group and the awareness of identified specific outcomes. While it is important to conceptually differentiate the two, in practice they are closely interlinked, as planning and monitoring of pedagogical activities, resources, spaces and protocols need to be closely related to identified outcomes.

In the Play Connections project, we have utilised a social constructivist and intentional pedagogy which draws on in interdisciplinary and intergenerational literature from early

childhood (Vygotsky, 1978; Palincsar, 2005) into older age (Hopner and Urban 2019). Our intentional pedagogy was also built around the aspiration for the IGP to benefit participants' wellbeing. Specifically, we utilised the Five Ways to Wellbeing (Aked, 2011; Aked et al., 2008).

In social constructivist pedagogy, all playgroup participants including children, parents, and elders, assume the active role of play agents, interacting with each other to enrich each other's wellbeing. Intentionally enacting social constructivist pedagogy means that not only the specific needs of each generation are met, but their interactions with each other are deliberately supported to enhance the opportunities for positive contact experiences. Supporting the agency of each generation and intentionally nurturing positive and respectful relationship is the key.

Connecting intergenerational play with 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'

Wellbeing is a dynamic and multi-pronged construct capturing such things as personal happiness, satisfaction, and mental capital (which encompasses resilience, self-esteem, cognitive capacity, and emotional intelligence). The importance of achieving a 'sense of wellbeing' has been recognised as playing a significant role in a person's quality of life. Wellbeing has become a focus of workplace productivity and educational contexts and is reflected in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) with an outcome focused on children having a strong sense of wellbeing. Wellbeing is also a focus for international and state based plans to support healthy and active ageing (WHO 2017, QLD Govt 2019).

The pathways to wellbeing are varied and complex. While debate continues about how best to measure 'wellbeing', in more recent years researchers, economists, educators and politicians have turned their attention toward what is perceived to be 'needed' to ensure individual cognitive capital, happiness and satisfaction. Aked and colleagues (2008) developed a framework, The Five Ways to

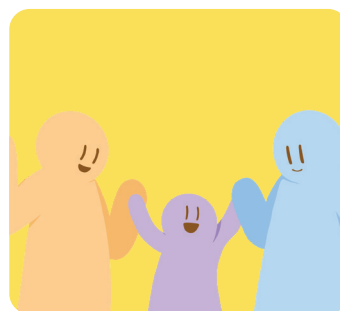
Wellbeing which outlines a set of simple daily practices associated with increased psychological and emotional wellbeing. The Five Ways to Wellbeing framework has relevance within the context of IGPs as it includes concepts and practices that apply equally well to children and adults (Aked et al., 2008). The framework, which draws on a rich evidence-base, addresses five key concepts: connecting, being active, taking notice, continuing to learn, and giving.

Connecting



The first component of the framework, connecting, refers to the ways individuals link, associate and invest with one another, capturing both broad and deep relationships with family, friends, neighbourhoods, schools, local communities and, in our instance, playgroups. The benefits of social connections are well-established in research literature, linking to increased self-esteem, a sense of belonging and self-worth, and lower levels of depression (Aked et al., 2008). Within our IGPs, opportunities for connection occurred through structured activities such as storytime and within the context of more flexible and informal activities such as during arrival and morning tea.

Being active



Being active captures mental and physical activity and involves practices such as walking, dancing, gardening, and playing. The benefits of being active extend beyond just physical health (e.g., obesity, decrease in cardiovascular disease) to include improved sleep, lower levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. Notably, the recent OECD International Early Learning Child Wellbeing Study (2020), found parents' engagement in activities with their children is linked to both child wellbeing (i.e., prosocial behaviour, trust) and learning (i.e., emergent literacy and numeracy). The activity levels of children, parents, and elderly members of our IGPs were supported through planned experiences such as group dance and yoga activities.

Taking notice



Taking notice involves being aware of yourself, others, and the environment. From a young child's perspective this may encompass being alert to new people, sights, sounds and experiences. Developing an understanding of 'others' is important for children developing self-understanding and self-regulation. For adults, taking notice involves being present in the moment, being more conscious of our surroundings and being more mindful of

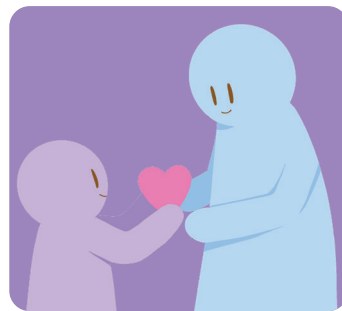
thoughts and emotions. These concepts underpin ‘mindfulness’ practices and have been linked with enhanced self-awareness, lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Opportunities for taking notice were fostered in our IGPs through the morning gathering and again through the re-gathering and reflection, where members came together to share artefacts and reflect on shared experiences.

Learning



Learning involves the acquisition of skills and knowledge, setting of goals as well as engagement in new experiences. While learning has often been prioritised amongst children or younger adults, more recently researchers have emphasised the benefits of learning in preventing brain atrophy amongst older populations. IGPs provide the potential for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge promoting both an individual and collective learning context. Learning new things is important for cognitive growth and development and increases our capacity to problem-solve and cope with stressful situations. Opportunities for learning were embedded within intentional learning activities and practices such as creative arts and literacy experiences. Learning was also fostered through deep and facilitated communication amongst IGP members and through the modelling of effective practices by the IGP facilitators.

Giving



Giving captures an individual’s ability to help others such as joining a community playgroup, doing something for someone else, teaching a new skill, smiling, or helping someone to achieve a goal. Helping others is associated with increased life satisfaction, feelings of competence, improved health, reduced stress and elevated moods. Collaborative creative arts experiences and physical activities in our IGPs provided a platform for the sharing of skills and expertise amongst the members. Programmed lulls and moments afforded participants to take carriage for activities such as a shared love of gardening.

Tables 1 and 2 outline the ways each component of the framework was enacted within the context of our IGPs as well as the potential benefits this holds for each of the participating generations. Table 1 identifies specific ways the children, adults, and elders were actively encouraged to connect, be active, learn, take notice, and give.

Table 2 identifies specific cognitive, physical, social and emotional benefits of the IGP for each of the participant groups.

Table 1. Examples of activities focused on Five Ways to Wellbeing











Ways to wellbeing	Examples from activities during IGPs		
	Child	Parent/Carer	Elder
Connecting 	Participate Smile and eye contact Ask/answer questions Share Contribute to group discussions	Participate Invite friends to attend Have conversations Listen actively Scaffold/support interactions	Participate Smile and eye contact Initiate conversations Reach out, touch, hug, physical closeness Provide physical assistance
Taking notice 	Observe activities Engage in cooperative play Sensory exploration	Observe Notice/infer how others may feel Walk outside Support/scaffold child and elders engagement	Observe Focus and concentrate Immerse self in an activity Notice/infer how others may feel Walk outside Sensory exploration
Being active 	Move to music Play a game Engage in gross motor skills (run, jump etc.) Active exploration	Move to music Squat up and down Raise arms Get up and down from chair Walk outside Active exploration	Move to music Squat up and down Raise arms Get up and down from chair Walk outside Active exploration
Learning 	Try new things Play Read books Engage in conversations	Try new things Play Read books Observe facilitators	Try new things Play Set goals Practice tasks Listen Observe
Giving 	Clean up after themselves Help others Show kindness	Clean up Acknowledge/praise/celebrate other's achievements Help with an activity Sit and talk with others Help participants' engagement Share expertise Participate in planning with facilitator(s)	Help children with an activity Ask/answer questions Give praise Share wisdom Draw on knowledge and/or experiences Share expertise Provide education to young children Participate in planning with facilitator(s)

Table 2. Indicators of the Five Ways to Wellbeing during IGPs

Ways to wellbeing	Indicators of the Five Ways to Wellbeing in action		
	Child	Parent	Elder
Connecting	 <p>Using social skills (e.g., sharing, negotiation, cooperation) Self-regulation Self-concept Developing positive relationships Enhanced empathy Trust and reciprocal relationships Collaboration Connecting to older adults Sense of belonging</p>	<p>Increased social participation Community connectedness Self-reflection and identity formation Emotional support Trust and engagement Increased informal networks Mental wellbeing Sense of belonging</p>	<p>Giving social support Increased social participation Reduced loneliness Lower anxiety and depression Sense of worth Increased memory Mental wellbeing Joy/Happiness Sense of belonging</p>
Taking notice	 <p>Using social skills Interest in interacting with older people Self-awareness Self-esteem Empathy</p>	<p>Enhanced parent-child relationship Lower parental stress Self-esteem Personal wellbeing Reduced ageism Respect for diversity Flexibility</p>	<p>Sense of worth Self-esteem Flexibility Enjoyment (pleasure in observing and being)</p>
Being active	 <p>Cognitive growth Gross and fine motor skill development Resilience Persistence Measured risk-taking</p>	<p>Enhanced mood Mobility Coordination Enjoyment</p>	<p>Enhanced mood Mobility Coordination Enjoyment</p>
Learning	 <p>Developmentally appropriate play Communication Resilience Problem-solving Emergent literacy, numeracy, and problem solving skills Creativity</p>	<p>Parental knowledge of child development Parenting skills Strategies to promote learning and engagement Parenting confidence Increased understanding of importance of play Access to information and resources</p>	<p>Respect for children's knowledge and skills Insights from young person's perspective Increased confidence</p>
Giving	 <p>Using social skills (sharing, turn-taking) Demonstrating empathy Self-regulation</p>	<p>Mood/happiness Empathy</p>	<p>Independence Sense of control Dignity Sense of purpose Happiness</p>

A structure for intergenerational playgroup sessions

Participants will come to a playgroup from the unique contexts of their lives, perhaps busy and bustling, perhaps quieter, and more solo. And they will bring with them different expectations, excitement and even apprehensions about the event. A playgroup session with a regular and predictable structure will generate a sense of familiarity within which all participants can feel secure and comfortable to participate.

Our IGPs are structured by three components:

- A sequence of events
- Organisation of time
- Themes for play.

A sequence of events

A consistent sequence of events can engage and include all participants within their own capacities.

Entering the space

We know elders, people with dementia, young children, and parents/carers will respond to a safe and familiar environment where they can see what's there, and others can see them. They are reassured by key details about securing valuables, the location of the toilets and so on. And since they're here to play, they will appreciate a playful environment – perhaps some music (not too loud!), a place to collect or make a colourful name badge, to blow some bubbles, and meet and reconnect with others.

Gathering and connecting

Gathering orientates us to this space at this time and with these people. It allows the facilitators to welcome and connect with participants and for participants to take notice of each other. It offers a starting place.

Connecting through story

We all love stories! Stories allow us to connect with our own experiences and understandings of the world. They remind us of experiences we've had and places we've been, of feelings we've felt and people we know. Stories can also take us to new places. Stories at IGPs offer opportunities to learn about new perspectives on the world and they are wonderful springboards for playing, being active, learning, and exploring!

Connecting through action (creativity and movement)

Activities related to creativity and movement are carefully planned to account for the needs, interests, and abilities of all participants. Creative activities offer opportunities for participants to take notice of their environments, themselves, and others, to learn from others and to help others in their own creative play. Activities include gathering materials and creating collage, working with portraits, and making and exploring the properties of clay – all experiences that a person can do regardless of age, ability, or mobility. Movement activities are similarly designed. Using music and dance, dress up costumes, sports, and environmental resources, we can encourage being active and helping others. You might include both movement and creative experiences in your IGP, or just one - we love it when we get to do both!

Generating lulls and moments

While our IGP sessions are carefully planned, they are flexible and organic, and shaped by the engagement and interactions among everyone. Movement from one activity to the next is relaxed and unrushed to allow opportunities for connections to be made, or to take a moment alone.

Celebrating and reflecting

Our IGP finishes as it began. We regather, share and celebrate stories, memories and artefacts from the play. We might tell or read a story or have conversations about future playdates we'd like to have. We often see extended farewells between our participants and a sense of anticipation for our next playdate.

Organisation of time

From our experience, 90 minutes of IGP seems to be the right amount. It's enough time to move across the experiences and avoids the need to rush.

But time features in our IGPs in another way. We plan for times that are active and those that are slower, the busy times and the times for reflection that allow people to connect differently. For example, connecting through action is a busy time where interactions are high between and among all participants, there are instructions to follow, tasks to do, movements to watch and repeat, and people to collaborate with to get the job done! And there are slower times.

These are important times where conversations start and friendships form. Slower times emerge between activities where people are moving to new spaces, at morning tea where people can chat over a snack, and at the end of the session where we reflect on our play and all that we enjoyed. The ups and downs are important times in our sessions.

Themes for play

The final way our IGPs are structured is through play themes designed to support our participants to keep on learning. Themes could start with the storybook, or a new season, an event in the community - something that brings the activities together allows our participants to bring their own knowledge of the theme to the play.

Themes let us choose songs, dances, stories, creative works, dress up costumes, food and so much more that cross the generational groups and build rich and long-lived memories of play.

The three components of sequencing of events, organisation of time, and themes for play, frame the activities which are designed with a focus on developing those Five Ways to Wellbeing.



PART 2 – Play: Activities, themes and resources

Welcoming

“A smile is the universal welcome.”
Max Eastman

In setting up and creating spaces to greet and welcome participants always check for hazards. Consider mobility and ensure there are clear pathways for navigation, especially for walkers and walking aids, prams or strollers so ensure a space for these. Have a place for storage of belongings, such as handbags, backpacks. This does not have to be an individual space, but somewhere that is safe but accessible.

Your welcome is paramount to the overall success of the group and to a sense of belonging for each participant regardless of their age. An initial positive experience will enhance involvement in the group and create a safe and welcoming environment.

Vibrant and flexible environments invite participants to interact and connect, cater for all age groups, and are supportive of the needs and interests of the child, parent, and older person.

An informal welcome time allows children, their parents/carers and elders to adjust to the setting, ease into the session, and prepare for what is to follow. That is, it's a time to become aware of and connect with the surroundings and those in it, the place and the people. It allows the facilitator to welcome and acknowledge each participant individually in a calm and friendly manner.

Materials/suggested resources

A smile and a friendly welcome.

Attempt to greet each participant by name as they arrive to create a sense of belonging:

- “Hello (name), what a great hat you are wearing today.”
- “It’s so lovely to see you back again, (name).”
- “How have you been since we last saw you, (name)?”

- “How did that celebration go that you were having on the weekend, (name)?”

Music creates a mood

Background music can set the scene for what is ahead. The music might be related to the theme. Or may have been suggested at a previous session by a participant as one of their favourites. Ensure the selected music is playing quietly as you do not want to impede any verbal interactions, especially with our elders who may have difficulty with hearing loss or younger participants who might be distracted by the multiple stimulants.

Somewhere to go and something to do

Have an area for early comers to go, and something to do whilst waiting. There are many possibilities, but here are a few suggestions:

- Make your own name tags using colourful markers and stickers. Not only are these useful for learning names, they can be kept and used again.
- Bubble blowing, puzzles for children and adults to work on together, construction activity, such as blocks or Duplo – simple set up and open to all!
- A book corner with chairs and cushions that cater for all generations.
- A home corner set up with dolls, cooking/care implements.
- A focus table with book/s and materials for play. If you are using a thematic approach, this is a clever way to introduce it.

Welcoming lasts as long as the period between the first and last arriving participants. Some may be longer than others, especially if some arrive early or late, but try not to let it become too long as you want to keep the momentum going and get the session started.

You can start while waiting for others, but make sure you all welcome them when they arrive:

- “Here’s (name) let’s make them welcome by giving them a wave. We have only just started, come join us.”

Getting started

- **Be organised.** Have the environment set up and ready to go so that it’s an invitation to explore and establish an impression for the session ahead.
- **Have a plan.** Know the order of events but be flexible with the timing and allow for spontaneous events/activities.
- **Invite participants and use their names.** Name tags help you and the other participants can also be prompted by them.
- **Transition using a prop.** Using a loud voice to summon everyone to the first activity may intimidate your participants, especially the younger ones and therefore getting the session off in a less than welcoming way. Consider a song or a story, “Come on over everyone. Let’s start our session with this book,” and leading the way to where you would like them to sit. Or perhaps a musical instrument is for you? A shaker can indicate a change or a transition, and so participants can prepare to respond.
- **Break the ice.** A bright and cheerful song is a friendly way to start your session and get everyone involved.
- **Communicate.** When participants know what to expect they are more likely to relax and have fun. A brief outline of the session at the welcome is a great support.
- **Let people warm up.** It’s OK to be slow to start. Some people might be hesitant and take a while to settle in. Some children may want to snuggle with a parent. Some older participants may just want to watch or chat with others. Everyone is different and everyone will get involved at their own pace. All you can do is be welcoming!

What to look for

The informal welcoming period offers ways to wellbeing for children, parents/carers and elders with opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give. Participants can:

- Connect with others to develop a sense of being welcome and valued as a member of the group.
- Take notice of the people and spaces for play.
- Be active in communicating and interacting informally with other participants.
- Learn and give information, e.g., names, routines, preferences and expectations for the session.

A note from Annie (Early Childhood Educator)

Our group has a shaker made in Africa. Even the youngest participant knows when they hear the shaker, we are moving onto something else. All our participants respond to the shaker quickly and with a sense of fun. They encourage others to stop, to finish the play and clean up.

We know that children love to help out so we may choose one of them to shake it for a warning and then to finish up. But we also know that the shaker allows the shaker’s voice to be heard, and so our parents, our carers and our elders also love the chance to gather the group’s attention!



Singing and music

“Music produces a kind of pleasure that human nature cannot do without” Confucius

How do you feel when you sing or when you hear music? Singing and music can bring joy and positivity to an occasion. It can also bring feelings of melancholy and nostalgia as we remember times past. Singing releases endorphins that promote positive feelings, and oxytocin (the bonding hormone), which can reduce stress and anxiety, helping us to connect to the group and become more aware of each other. Singing and music connect us to past experiences and memories.

As adults, we sometimes lose the spontaneity of singing and the sharing of musical experiences. Instead, we lapse into adages such as:

- “I’m a hopeless singer!”
- “I’d feel sorry for someone who has to hear me sing!”
- “I know nothing about music.”
- “I’m just not musical.”

As a facilitator, you don’t need a musical background or experience singing in public.

All you need is the spontaneity of a child and the confidence to give it a go... and you too will feel and see the joy and positivity.

Materials/suggested resources

A space for singing

You can sing anywhere and at any time. But if your chosen song requires movement you will have to ensure that the space is clear of hazards. So, think about this in your planning and eliminate or limit the risk.

Recorded music is a great help

With technology today, this is as easy as having a mobile phone and a portable speaker, and perhaps someone to show you how it works! YouTube and Spotify are a great source for accessing songs and music.

Songs!

Songs that encourage actions and movements will promote engagement. You could connect the song to your theme to maintain the focus. Familiar songs, like nursery rhymes will promote involvement.

Consider movie soundtracks because they often include songs that cross generations (what was once old, becomes new again!). Popular songs will help in a similar way. Many parents, grandparents and children know the words of some of the popular songs from the movie 'Frozen.' The participants will know and can suggest songs too, and they might even be able to play and sing it for the group to join in!

A note from Annie (Early Childhood Educator)

I will never forget my Mum, who had advanced dementia. She didn't even know my name. But I watched her joyfully singing and recalling every word of the songs when singing in a group at her nursing home.

We can be active when we sing and dance, which increases our feelings of wellbeing through movement.

The activity

Introduce the experience. "Today we have a song that you may know." or "Let's listen to this song and you can tell me if have heard it before."

Encourage participation. "Have you got your marching feet and clapping hands ready? You will need them for this song," or, "This song has lots of movements you will have to listen very carefully so you can do them too."

Manipulate the words. Sing loudly or softly, move in various ways, adjust the rhythm of your singing or movements. "This song is about a lion, so let's use our growly voice!" or, "This song is a lullaby, so we will sing it very softly."

Seek ideas. You don't need to have all the ideas, "How do we do an action like a dolphin swimming?" or, "How do you think we could sing this marching song?" or "Does anyone have a song they would like to sing?"

Follow the lead of the participants. Children are great innovators when singing. Our elders and parent/carers may also be creative or a little bit cheeky. They may change the words or movements to songs, so take their lead and sing

or move differently.

Use the song as a transition. "Let's sing our song as we move to our art experience," or, "We can all stomp to the bathroom to wash our hands for morning tea, just like the elephants in our song."

Considerations for participation

Safety first. Clear the space if moving. Maybe encourage the children to hold the hand of an older participant which will help with safety and encourage interactions and connections.

It's OK to choose not to participate. Some participants may not want to sing and dance, and that's OK. Try encouraging "What's your favourite song, (name)?" or "Can you show us how we can move like a train, (name)?" You could repeat songs so that these non-participants become more familiar with the song and then possibly join in.

Too much noise. Be aware that some participants may have hearing or sensory issues that affect or impact their motivation to participate because there is just too much noise. Please consider the music you choose and monitor the volume so that it is inclusive of all participants.

What to look for

Singing and music offer a range of ways to wellbeing for children, parents/carers and older members through opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give.

Children can:

- Connect with participants through singing and moving to music.
- Take notice of the rhythms of language and sounds in playful ways.
- Be active with and take notice of people across the generations in playful and fun movement experiences.
- Learn literacy knowledge and develop self-regulation through interactions with the song and music.
- Give ideas and learn from the ideas of others.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect and interact with their child and others through music.
- Take notice as they experience the joy of singing and moving with their child.

- Be active in their own play through music and song.
- Learn new knowledge about interacting with their child through music that they may repeat at home.
- Give ideas about preferred songs and/or their own musical talents.

Elders can:

- Connect across generations through physical closeness, social participation and the joy of singing and moving with others.
- Connect to past experiences and memories through music and song.
- Take notice and respond to the experience in playful ways.
- Be active in an experience that requires concentration, recall and coordination.
- Learn to move in new and/or long forgotten ways.
- Give ideas about preferred songs and/or their own musical talents.



Story time

"I do believe something magical can happen when you read a good book!"
JK Rowling

Reading together is fun for everyone. Grandparents and parents may recall the connections and intimacy of curling up in a chair and sharing stories with their little ones. Sharing stories promotes recall of pleasurable shared and individual experiences and an opportunity to share ideas and memories. The language of books promotes literacy learning for young children and the opportunity for adults to use their voice and interact in a variety of ways that sometimes may be a little silly and fun.

Stories teach us about places we have never been, experiences we have never had, and emotions we have never experienced. They offer connections to our past experiences and rekindle old emotions. Stories help us all make sense of the world around us. When reading or sharing a story, we become aware and take notice of the sheer joy and pleasure of stories and of being lost in an imaginary world or a world that satisfies our curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Sharing a story promotes connectedness by recalling and sharing experiences, memories, and ideas in our lives. We are learning and helping others to learn about who we are and what we think and how we feel, and about how words work in a story.

Materials/suggested resources

A cosy space

Set up in a corner with the space defined by chairs appropriate for participants and/ or cushions (not great for our older participants but great for children to get close to the action!) Allow children to snuggle up with their adult as they may at home when sharing a story. Have your reading chair/space positioned where all participants can see the book, particularly if it has pictures.

Connect with the audience

Your participants are varied in age, culture, and gender, so select something that appeals across

groups. Stories about universal experiences such as love, adventure, mystery, travel and so on will allow multiple entry points. Consider the length of the story – quality over quantity! Consider images – clear and easy to see and understand what's being said through the pictures. You want to keep everyone interested and entertained!

Stories

You'll know what's right. Familiar stories, those fairy tales and fables that are well known can stimulate memories and promote sharing. Stories you like, you've read or seen before, or those recommended by others are likely to be popular with your IGP participants too. Stories that relate to the IGP theme will develop shared knowledge about that theme. Consider stories that are attractive and interesting for all ages, whose topics, images, words, and design can entertain everyone.

Choose stories that are fun and entertaining, mysterious, and intriguing, soft and playful, stories with rhyme and repetition that pull listeners into a flow that carries them along. Use stories with characters and "voices" so you can imitate and use them to keep your audience involved, stories that promote actions, ones with big pictures that provide opportunities for discussion and connection to the words, ones that promote inclusion with non-specific gender roles or characters with varying abilities.

The more fun you have; the more enjoyment is created and the more your audience will participate. Try out those crazy voices:

- Shout or whisper, growl, or oink.
- Use gestures and movements.
- Change the expressions on your face.
- Highlight rhyme, rhythm, and repetition by varying your voice or singing.
- Find ways to move and laugh.

Be mindful that sometimes the story may be a quiet one or one that causes us to pause and think. Be part of the story.

A WOW moment from Annie (Early Childhood Educator):

We were reading the well known picture book 'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendak. This is a great book for a variation in voice tone, gesturing and movement by the reader. At one playgroup a parent commented, "We read this all the time, (name) loves it!" And so, the child and parent could then join in with the words.

The 'rumpus' in the book, was an opportunity for adults and children to get on the move. With the words from the book, "Let the wild rumpus begin!" we all stood up and created our own rumpus. At the conclusion of the book and after a short discussion, we all dressed up as 'wild things' with crazy scarves, hats and dress ups provided. It was great to see our elders and parents/carers dressing up and having fun. We then made our own 'rumpus' to music found on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9Jy1F7XR9Y>

Such fun and all from reading a book!

The activity

Story time is not long, about 10 minutes (unless it flows to other activities which happened in the example above!).

- **Introduce the book.** The front cover is a great place to share the name and the author/illustrator, find out if anyone knows the story, ask your participants to predict the story
- **Read it!** Vary your pitch, tone, volume, and pace. Everyone loves the element of surprise in a story, so if the book allows, start very softly to build up to the surprise with a LOUD voice. Or take on the voices in the story – roar like the lion, cry like the baby, zoom like the car! Refer to the illustrations to help everyone understand the story.
- **Invite participation.** Try to ask open ended questions that prompt extended responses rather than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. "Let's all make pig noises!" "What do you think will happen next?" "Tell me about when you went to the beach." Or share your own experiences

"Let me tell you about when I saw a whale."

Some stories naturally provoke responses, and some participants may know the story, providing an opportunity for shared reading or reading by them, instead of you as the facilitator. Be aware of dominant participants or those who appear uninterested. "That's so interesting, I wonder what someone else/(name) thinks." Address questions to particular people. Encourage all participants to share their story/ideas. It's not just about the children!

- **Respond to comments.** Show that you are listening and use their names as a demonstration of respect and inclusion.
- **Get off your bottoms.** Movement helps retain interest in the story, for example, "Everyone, show me how you walk like the giant."
- **Monitor and modify the book if people appear to be losing interest.** You don't have to read all the words, just make sure it still makes sense.
- **End with something interesting.** "Did you know that about cows?" "Let's all have a rumpus like the Wild Things." A short discussion/experience concludes the activity for everyone.

Possible variations

- **Consider storytelling instead of reading.** We can all tell a great story, and everybody has a story to tell. Familiar stories are great because participants can participate in the telling, increasing participation and engagement in the story and celebrating others story telling skills.
- **Use props and movement.** Props like puppets, found items from home, dress ups and musical instruments will involve children, parents and older people in the story. "Let's imagine we are going in search of hidden treasure." Invite ideas of what will happen next such as "Where will we look next?", "How will we creep up on those pirates?"
- **Use a known song to tell the story.** One of our favourites is 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen.

- Share stories in a range of languages including English. Your multilingual participants can help!

What to look for

Storytime offers a range of ways to wellbeing for children, parents/carers and older members through opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give.

Children can:

- Connect to stories through their events and topics, group discussions, and asking and responding to questions.
- Take notice of and be active in sharing story experiences through curiosity, imagination and play.
- Be active in sharing and taking on perspectives on the world across generations.
- Learn early language, emergent reading skills, vocabulary and comprehension.
- Learn social competence and emotional understanding (e.g., empathy) and self-regulatory skills (e.g., attentional capacity, memory).
- Give ideas and respond to the ideas of others.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with participants and build relationships by sharing and exploring stories together through play.
- Take notice of their child's interactions with others and with stories and the opportunities for connecting home and playgroup experiences.
- Be active in promoting literacy through play for all participants.
- Learn about different books and approaches to sharing stories.
- Give perspectives and ideas during story time to develop the group's knowledge.

Elders can:

- Connect with others through story and playful experiences that may not be part of their regular lives.
- Take notice of children's insights and how they make sense of the world.
- Be active participants through listening, talking, moving, learning and remembering actions.
- Learn about stories and ways of sharing them.
- Give their knowledge, ideas, memories and story-telling skills as part of discussions about the story.





Gardening

Most gardeners will agree that gardening is good for your mind, body and spirit. For some, just touching the earth is a strong sensory and spiritual experience that releases endorphins making them feel good about themselves. Gardening allows us to connect with nature which refreshes our minds and gives pleasure.

Gardening experiences in the intergenerational playgroup setting not only promotes this connection with nature, but a connection to each other. Elders and parents/carers can share their gardening knowledge and skills with our younger members of the group, becoming co-facilitators in the experience, as well as giving and accepting a helpful hand when needed.

Gardening is an opportunity for participants of all ages to be active and learn new and different concepts and skills. We can strengthen our bodies through movements such as digging and our minds through discovering the names of plants and how to take care of them. Gardening for all ages is a form of play that brings pleasure and promotes self-identity, especially when we achieve something beautiful or tasty through our efforts.

"The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but grows to the enduring happiness that the love of gardening gives." Gertrude Jekyll

Materials/suggested resources

Somewhere to garden

A garden bed is ideal, especially a raised one where all participants can sit and reach comfortably. Some participants may experience health conditions which cause decreased joint movement, muscle weakness, pain, or limited endurance. Others may live with vision or sensory limitations. To ensure you cater for these participants maybe garden at a table or raised bed with the use of a chair or wheelchair; or be mindful and pair off with a more able-bodied participant who can help them out.

However, a garden bed is not a necessity. You can garden in containers, big and small and these are ideal for the participant who needs to sit or who has mobility limitations, as they can be placed on a table within easy reach.

Containers can be recycled pots, yogurt containers, egg cartons and more. Wood, plastic, clay, metal, wire and moss containers will all work. If you want to get a little creative why not try some quirky containers like preloved boots/shoes, crockery items or old buckets.

Soil for the garden or potting mix for containers

You need potting mix for containers because it helps retain moisture and air space ensuring roots grow quickly. Always read the instructions on the potting mix packet to ensure safety for users including masks and gloves if necessary.

Gloves in various sizes

For their safety and comfort, participants may wear gloves for gardening. It's best to provide gloves of varying sizes for their use.

A water source

Seeds and seedlings must be watered immediately after planting. And if the plants are to remain onsite, you may also need to find someone to water in between sessions. Remember not to leave buckets of water unattended around very young children and toddlers.

'Real' tools for everyone!

Using proper garden tools shows you acknowledge and respect the value of their work. Cheap plastic child's gardening tools are worse than no tools at all because they can break easily and frustrate the user. Ensure you have lightweight, easy-to-handle, correct-sized tools and garden equipment that everyone is able to use for your specific activity.

Plants/seeds

Choose large, brightly coloured flowers and vegetables that grow quickly. Sunflowers, corn and pumpkins (if you have room) are good choices. Textual and sensory plants are also a hit for all ages, so think of your senses:

- **Taste:** strawberries, cherry tomatoes, herbs such as basil or rosemary.
- **Touch:** succulents, woolly lamb's ear, which you can grow from a cutting.

- **Smell:** jasmine, mint, lavender.
- **Sight (bright colours):** pansies, daffodils.
- **Sound:** grasses that rustle in the wind or bamboo.

Choose plants/seeds that are safe for those who may have allergies and that are obviously not poisonous. Your choice of seeds or plants will depend upon your environment and the experience you have planned.

The activity

Here are a few you might enjoy:

Grass heads

Grass heads are funny head shaped plants that grow grass for hair! Making grass heads is another great activity for all ages. I am sure that most adults in the group, elders or parent/carers, have at some time in their childhood made a grass head in some form. An added bonus is that the participants are able to take home their finished product and watch it grow!

Hint: Make one first as an example, so that everyone can see what it will look like when finished.

Here's what you need:

- Old stockings, you only need part of the stocking for each participant.
- Grass seed.
- Sphagnum moss or cushion filler (you can recycle old ones which works just as well).
- Some stick-on small eyes or any stickers from the cheap shop to make facial features or you can draw them with a permanent marker.
- Some recycled jars/containers.

Here's what you do:

- Stretch a stocking over the jar to make a well. Be aware that some people might need your help.
- Fill the well with some seeds and moss/cushion filler.
- When you have made something that looks like a head, tie a knot in the bottom leaving

a bit of the stocking poking out, because this will act as a wick when it's in the jar of water.

- Decorate the face using the stickers, textas and other craft materials.
- Place the face on top of a jar/container of water with the 'wick' in the water.
- Place your grass head in a sunny spot and watch the hair grow! Make sure the water remains topped up.

Quirky pot plants

Quirky pot plants are fast growing colourful seeds or seedlings growing in an interesting or unusual container. Making quirky pot plants encourage your participants to be creative and imaginative, and a little bit quirky!

Here's what you need:

- A quirky container...the quirkier the better. Encourage participants to bring their own quirky preloved or recycled container. Or you could request one type, like an old pair of boots or shoes, or even an old handbag! Or you could visit an op shop or recycling depot and pick out some quirky containers for participants to use.
- An implement to make small drainage holes in the bottom of the container. It is best that one of the adult participants does this or you do it before the participants arrive. Be aware of your those who need help.
- Potting mix.
- Fast growing seeds such as Alyssum or Violets.
- Gloves.

Here's what you do:

- Fill the quirky container with potting mix - sufficiently, but not too full.
- Sprinkle seeds over the top of the pot and cover with potting mix.
- Water the seeds gently and carefully and place then put your plant in a sunny spot. Ta da! In a few weeks you will have a quirky pot plant!

Considerations for participation

Be aware and respectful of non-participants. Not everyone may want or be able to participate, and that's OK. Some may not be interested or able to participate due to health issues or maybe they prefer to sit and observe.

Use correct terminology for plant names and processes. Even the youngest participant can learn and recognise these names. Use the gardening knowledge of your participants to suggest gardening experiences and co-facilitate the gardening and sharing of knowledge. There is no doubt you will have a gardening expert within your group.

Sustainability. Use your gardening activity to talk about recycling and sustainability. You may have an expert recycler in your group who can give advice on obtaining recycled or preloved containers, or an expert gardener who can provide seeds or cuttings.



Recognise there will be failures and that's OK.

Not all gardening bears flowers or fruits or vegetables. So, if all else fails make a scarecrow. That would be lots of fun!

Celebrate successes. If success happens, harvest the flowers, fruit or vegetables and admire or eat, rejoicing in the fact that you produced it yourselves! Remember to talk about any plantings that were taken home and celebrate those successes too!

What to look for

As a way to wellbeing, gardening offers opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give for children, parents/carers and older participants.

Children can:

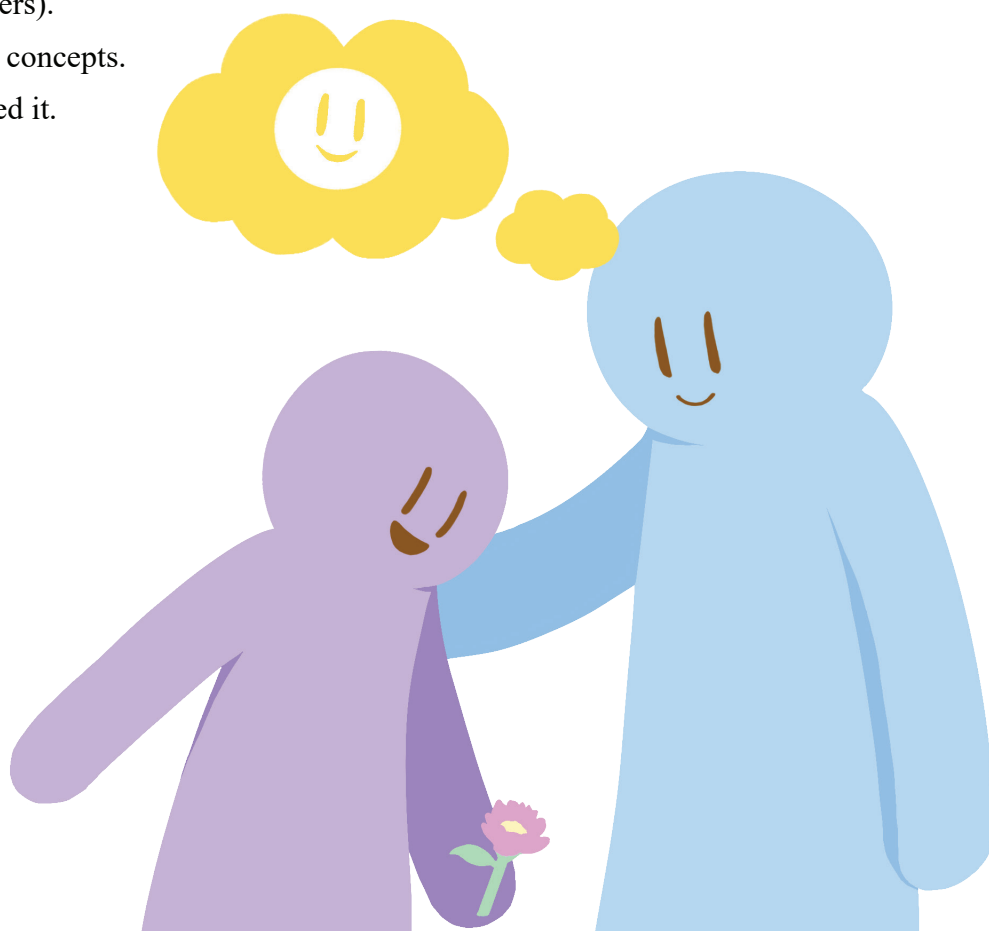
- Connect with nature with peers and others.
- Take notice of the ways gardening activates interest and enthusiasm in others.
- Be active using gross motor skills such as digging, weeding or watering plants, and fine motor skills such as manipulating seeds or writing plan labels.
- Learn social skills through positive interactions (e.g., sharing, asking for help), and self-regulation skills (e.g., co-operating and working alongside others).
- Learn new vocabulary and concepts.
- Give help to those who need it.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect and interact with others through nature and the manipulation of soil, plants and water.
- Take notice about their child's ways of playing and their interactions and engagement with others.
- Be active – bending, digging, planting, watering – all good for physical and mental wellbeing!
- Learn about and/or give to others gardening knowledge and skills, potentially identifying a shared passion.

Elders can:

- Connect socially with people of all ages in the shared task of gardening.
- Take notice and learn about gardening from a child's perspective.
- Be active and move in ways that may be different or ways that they haven't for some time (e.g., digging with a spade, manipulating dirt).
- Learn from others and share gardening memories and experiences.
- Be the 'expert' and give gardening knowledge and skills to others.





Cooking

"Cooking is at once child's play and adult joy." Craig Claiborne

Cooking together and sharing food has connected friends, families, and strangers for centuries. Preparing food and eating together can promote social skills, awareness of others and the creation of memories that can last a lifetime. Cooking in an IGP does not have to be elaborate, just simple and enjoyable for all ages. It is an opportunity for elders and parents/carers to teach and share their knowledge and skills with children as they learn this basic life skill. Cooking requires participants to be active using gross and fine motor skills and to be aware of those needing help or guidance. Cooking across the generations is an opportunity to pass on family traditions and recipes and share food from individual cultures, thus increasing self-identity and sense of belonging. It may also be an opportunity to try new foods or revisit tastes or experiences from the past.

Materials/suggested resources

A recipe

Keep it simple and fun with a quick outcome. Recipes can be easily sourced by searching key terms like 'Kids Cooking' or by asking participants to share their ideas and favourites. Food is often associated with celebrations the world over for example Christmas, Diwali, Eid

Al-Fitr and Chinese New Year. Celebrations could become a playgroup theme that includes sharing simple recipes or stories of food.

Ingredients

Food allergies, cultural sensitivities and physical issues, such as teeth problems and limited or developing coordination will impact a cooking experience. Avoid nut products – a common allergen for children. If you have a garden at your venue, use the fruits of your labour and everyone will get a kick out of using something you have grown together.

No heat required

Don't think you can't cook if your venue doesn't have an oven or a cooktop or even a microwave. There are still plenty of things to 'cook' without them. For example, you could cut up fruit and thread the pieces onto skewers for a yummy morning tea.

Real utensils

To be inclusive of all participants, use real utensils. You can now purchase small 'sharp' knives for little hands. Using real utensils helps build self-help skills, self-identity and independence. It's so frustrating and undignified for participants trying to use plastic knives that don't cut properly. The same applies with crockery bowls. But the golden rule is effective

supervision by having participants cook together across the generations, thus minimising the risk whilst maintaining the benefit.

The activity

Be prepared. Have everything you need before your session starts, so the transition to a cooking activity is not chaotic. Set up in small groups if possible so that everyone can be engaged in the experience, if they want to be. Be mindful to sit children between adults, so there is an extra pair of eyes being aware of their safety and needs.

Safety first. Cooking is a great time to remind and talk about safety with everyone. Do this before you start and give warnings throughout when things are hot or sharp. Ensure elders are positioned so they do not have to overreach.

Keep it simple. Something as simple as making a sandwich is a great activity because the participants can eat it as soon as they are finished. Instant gratification - can't you just see the smile on a child's face "I did it myself!"

Give the recipe to an adult. You don't have to be everywhere at once! Recipes in adults' hands can involve them as 'cooks' of the group who can share expert knowledge and skills, or it can encourage an elder or parent/carer to co-facilitate their own small group. Make multiple copies of the recipe, one for each group.

Learn as you cook. Encourage accurate terminology. Cooking is an opportunity, especially for children to learn new words and concepts. Cooking involves science when attention is given to how ingredients change colour, texture and form (liquids, solids, gases). You could ask them to predict "What do you think will happen if we heat this butter in the microwave?" or observe "Watch what happens when I mix this egg with the flour." Maths learning too "Let's count three teaspoons", "Can you please get half a cup of flour and put it in the bowl."

A chance to be active, even when sitting down. Stirring, measuring, rolling, squeezing and spreading are just a few cooking tasks for developing and using fine motor and hand-eye coordination skills for all ages.

Don't fuss about the mess. Undoubtedly, there will be mess because you can't cook and have fun without it! However, mess is also an opportunity to ask for help to clean it up and you will be amazed how participants will do this and make it fun. Good cooks always clean up after themselves, so they say!

Celebrate and enjoy the end product. Some would say the eating is the best part. Share this together or create your own containers for takeaway to enjoy later.

Possible variations

Surprise! Cooking does not always result in something to eat.

Pretend to cook. Cooking can also involve pretend play in a sand pit, a mud patch, an outdoor kitchen or in a home corner. With a little bit of thought and resourcefulness these areas can be created at any venue with little cost.

Check out op shops or ask for donations. Some of your participants may have preloved pots and pans, crockery or implements they could donate.

Be sustainable and try not to buy new! The local Men's Shed may construct you a kitchen or home corner stove or fridge. Be mindful about the ways elders or participants in wheelchairs can participate if the sand pit or mud patch is low to the ground, a raised one would be more beneficial.

Invite participants to share their family recipes or recipes from their own culture. Not only could your group cook and enjoy some delicious food but it could be an opportunity to discover different cultures and their music, dress and language providing a great opportunity for learning for all participants.

Create your very own recipe book. Use illustrations by participants, including the children.

Have fun days with cooking. A Teddy Bears' Picnic is an example of making all the food required for the great outdoors with your teddy bears. What fun you could have not only sharing the cooking and eating, but with your teddy bears as well!

What to look for

Cooking offers opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give for children, parents/carers and older participants.

Children can:

- Connect with others to develop social and self-regulation skills such as sharing, turn taking, and working safely with utensils.
- Take notice of and learn about the ways ingredients interact to create (e.g., stirring milk into flour).
- Be active to develop fine motor skills and hand eye co-ordination.
- Learn about new foods and combinations of food that others like.
- Learn literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledges by reading and following instructions, counting, measuring.
- Give help to others by sourcing ingredients and working with a team to create a product and participating in cleaning up.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with others through stories and traditions of preparing and sharing food in playful and imaginative ways.
- Take notice and respond to the ways their child interacts and works with others.
- Be active in working as a team to prepare food.
- Learn about and give knowledge about cooking and the benefits of playful cooking experiences.
- Give help to others in ways that ensures everyone can contribute (e.g., reading for the group, sourcing materials).

Elders can:

- Connect socially and communicate with people of all ages through the preparation and sharing of food.
- Connect with others through imaginative, creative and playful cooking experiences.
- Take notice and give help to younger participants as they develop cooking skills.
- Be active to maintain fine motor and hand eye co-ordination.
- Give information about the skills for preparing and cooking food.
- Give to and learn from others by recalling and share cooking memories, traditions, recipes and experiences and learn about the memories, traditions, recipes and experiences of others.

Morning tea

"The sharing of food is the basis of social life." Laurie Colwin

Universally, sharing food with family and friends is part of the fabric of life. Traditionally, playgroups serve morning tea.

Materials/suggested resources

Healthy food and drinks

Keep it simple! A variety of seasonal fruit and water is always a good option. Fruit presents fewer issues for allergies and is nourishing for all participants. Serving hot drinks for adults is not safe, so it's best to stick to water.

Serving implements

Make sure you have enough cups, plates, water jugs and tongs for the size of your group.

A place to gather

Create an inclusive space where the whole group can gather. This may be a long table or tables pushed together. It may be a picnic blanket with chairs as well as cushions. Perhaps use decorate with a tablecloth or flowers to create that special feel.

The activity

Be prepared

If possible, have the fruit cut up and prepared on large serving plate/s and covered before the session starts. Set the space up where morning tea will be served and have all serving implements ready.

Be hygienic

Ensure all participants preferably wash and dry their hands or otherwise use hand sanitiser before sitting down to eat. Pack away all implements and left-over food at conclusion of morning tea.

Be encouraging

Participants may contribute to food preparation or setting up morning tea, they could set the tables, pick flowers to decorate the table or cut up the fruit.

Be unhurried

Schedule morning tea for about halfway through the session. It provides a break for everyone from the planned activities and offers informal



opportunities to spend uninterrupted time together. It's informal and unhurried – between 15 and 30 minutes. Leave time for uninterrupted conversations. Keep your eyes and ears open. Join in and take the opportunity to learn more about your participants to your planning.

Be inclusive

You may want to be strategic, perhaps spreading elders' chairs amongst parents/carers and children to encourage interactions across generations. Invite children to try helping themselves to food and drinks using smaller tongs and water jugs. Most children will probably want to eat, especially when given the opportunity to serve themselves. However, some parents/carers or elders may prefer not to eat or even sit down. Encourage them to congregate around the space, to connect with others. Or to just sit, observe and be!

A note from Annie (Early Childhood Educator)

At our playgroup, morning tea is an informal time to gather, share food and interact and connect across the generations.

Conversations are often spontaneous and sometimes intimate as adults and children are presented with a relaxed and familiar setting, much like a family dinner table.

Elders who may live alone take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the communal setting of sharing and a chat.

Parents, carers and children share food while meeting members of families outside of their own.

Our participants help each other by passing plates, offering food and pouring drinks. Giving is promoted through awareness of others and extending kindness and help when needed.

For us, morning tea time is an authentic opportunity to connect, become aware of and learn more about each other.

Considerations for participation

Dietary requirements

Participants with specific dietary requirements may prefer to bring their own food.

Individual/group preferences

You could discuss food preferences with your group and adjust the food provided for morning tea to suit the likes of your specific group.

Cooking and sharing

If during your session you have enjoyed a cooking experience, now is the time to eat the fruits of your labour! How exciting for the group to cook then eat together!

What to look for

As an extension to cooking experiences, morning tea supports wellbeing through opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give for children, parents/carers and older participants.

Children can:

- Connect in informal ways with participants through the sharing of food.
- Take notice of the ways shared eating experiences may differ from home (e.g., turn taking, sitting/standing, talking, offering food and sharing).
- Be active in participating in the processes of morning tea, e.g., using safe hygiene practices and self-help skills.
- Learn communication, interaction and social skills (i.e., cooperation, consideration of others) with people outside their usual experience.
- Give to others by offering food, spending time, sharing stories and participating in the clean up.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with other parents/carers, other children and older people in an informal setting.
- Take notice of others in the group and offer assistance or an opportunity to connect.
- Be active as leaders in the group by encouraging sharing, participation and conversation, and helping with cleaning and packing up as part of a group.
- Learn about their child's skills interacting with unfamiliar adults and children.
- Give information, affirmation, advice and insights into topics of conversation with adult participants, e.g., play, parenting, food, the activities from that morning!

Elders can:

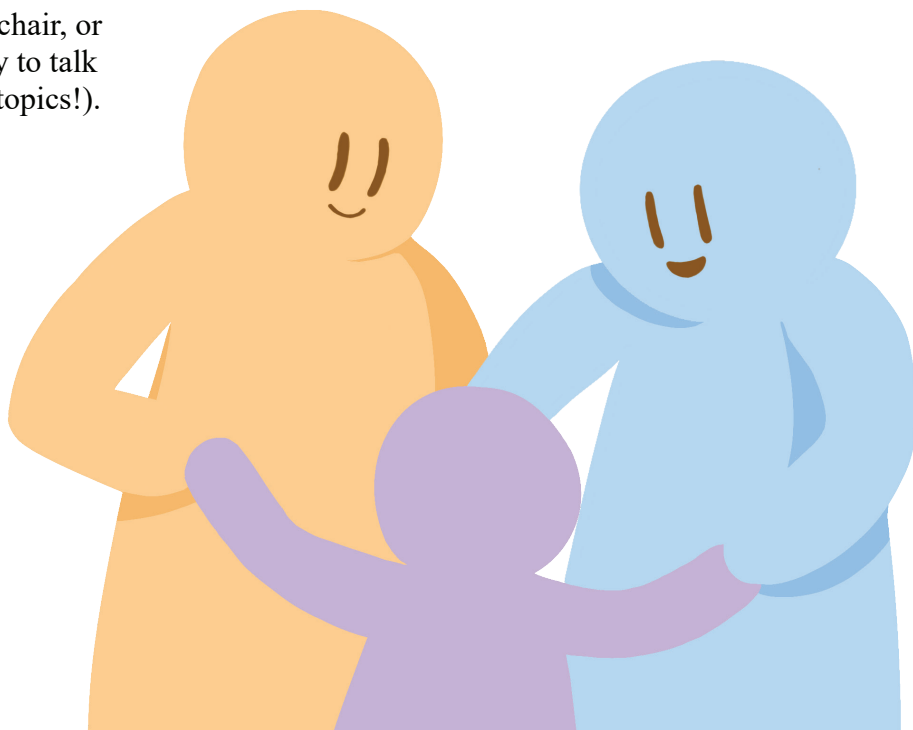
- Connect with others to share food and conversation, especially important for those who live alone.
- Connect socially through participation and offering assistance in a less familiar environment.
- Take notice of others, their choices and interactions between and among themselves.
- Be active with movement to the morning tea area and getting up and down from their chairs or moving between different groups for conversation.
- Learn about the interests and preferences of others.
- Give help to others by offering a chair, or food and drink, or the opportunity to talk about preferred foods (and other topics!).

A note from Tracey (Exercise Physiologist)

Disclaimer!

Facilitators should seek a disclaimer from participants, particularly elders. Whilst facilitators should design their programs appropriate for elders potentially living with multiple morbidities or limitations, participants need to declare specific risks which may impact their ability to participate in the program.

Older adults or adults with chronic conditions should ensure they have been cleared to participate in a physical activity program, so that risks can be managed appropriately, and each participant's therapeutic needs are taken into account. This will maximise the benefits of exercise / physical activity and ensure their safety.



Preparing for movement

Participating in an exercise program can sound daunting but remember that your main goal is to encourage people to move more, ultimately improving participant health and wellbeing.

Even small increases in physical activity can have a positive impact on health and quality of life. It's important to remember to use appropriate language when communicating with participants. Participants may be reluctant to participate if the word “exercise” is used. Using the word “movement” may be less intimidating and you may find they engage with the proposed activity with more enthusiasm.

Observe your participants

Observe the body language of the elder, children and parent/carers as they arrive. Elders may stand back, look hesitant. Parents take cover behind their child. Children may be clingy or crying. These observations provide immediate feedback on how you might need to adjust your upcoming session. It is important to help make all participants feel safe and welcomed. It is also important to gauge the mobility needs and potential falls risk of elders. Observing how people move can also give you feedback on how to regress any movements you have prepared to present at your session.

The space

Regardless of the planned activity, ensure there is ample space for participants to move should they have mobility devices. There must be sufficient space for elders, children and parents/carers to move around the space. To prevent falls or injury, eliminate trip hazards and watch for children who may wander or run.

Vary experiences to meet all needs

Elders may require regressions (modifications) for movements.

Use sturdy, standard height chairs with arm rests allow so that alternative movements can be completed sitting down.

Be prepared to slow down movements for some participants, but on the flip side, be prepared for high energy movements more often exhibited by children.

Parent/carers can play a multifaceted, pivotal role in the playgroup session. Encourage parents/carers to be involved by co-facilitating the session with you, either assisting elders and guiding children through movement patterns, or alternatively by taking part in the session as a participant.





Be active: Dancing background and description

May I Have This Dance?

Weddings, birthdays and other celebrations shouldn't be the only time different generations come together to have fun and let their hair down. Intergenerational programs offer benefits for all. Where else can you find grandparents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers next to best friends and eccentric co-workers?

Everyone is welcome when it's time to dance! There are many forms of dancing, from ballroom to disco, to rock and roll. Dancing has always been a part of human culture, rituals and celebrations. It is a great way to express yourself. Dancing together can generate joyous sharing, laughter, creativity, and movement.

Music is common during exercise and has proved to motivate and have a positive effect through physiological changes and emotional responses. Repetitive dance sequences support participants' learning. Repetition can build muscle, correct posture, increase flexibility, improve reflexes, balance and coordination.

In fact, dancing is shown in some cases to be more beneficial than repetitive physical exercise for developing brain plasticity. And since dancing and music are so much fun, your participants may not even realise they are reaping the benefits of exercise! So, dance like no-one's watching!

Materials/suggested resources

A big open space

Establishing a dance session in a big open accessible space makes it easier for those with mobility and cognitive needs to dance. Ensure chairs are available, and participants have easy access to supportive frames and sturdy walls if necessary. Be mindful of trip hazards.

Props

Flowers, music, ribbons and balls can engage participants in the activity through visual stimulation, conversation and an opportunity to connect with other participants.

The activity

- **Show don't tell.** Even if you feel a bit shy as the facilitator, you should demonstrate not only the dance moves, but the freedom, happiness and joy that comes with dancing. How else will your participants feel relaxed enough to join in?
- **Allow time for settling in.** Allow plenty of time for instructions, and for participants to move into a position where they feel safe and comfortable.

A note from Tracey (Exercise Physiologist)

Dancing develops the Five Ways to Wellbeing!

Effort and synchronicity emulate the social effects of dance, allowing us to connect. It goes without saying, dancing is active. It promotes movement and fluidity, laughter and joy. Dance is fluid and ever changing, allowing participants to keep learning.

Body and spatial awareness is key when dancing. Dance provides an opportunity for participants to be aware as they explore their capabilities and limits.

And finally, participants engaging and dancing together opens up pathways for empathy and opportunities to help others through movement.

- **Don't get too rigid or structured in the plan.** Great movements can be as simple as standing up and completing hip circles or twisting motions to the rhythm of the music. Incorporating arm movements where participants can reach forward, backwards or side to side can be a gentle way to introduce movement to participants who might feel nervous or hesitant about engaging in the session.
- **Encourage and engage.** Props, enthusiasm, colourful facial expressions and body language will encourage parents and other facilitators to get involved too.
- **Keep checking in.** A participant who isn't joining in may change their mind once they see that it's fun and non-judgmental. Adapt movements to those with mobility issues, perhaps to seated options.
- **Tap into your creativity.** Understand the needs of older and younger participants and what their capabilities and limitations are. Design your session on your expertise and the perceived needs of the class and allow for flexibility to the session to ensure all participants benefit.
- **Finish with a thank you.** Acknowledging and appreciating participation promotes

community and respect amongst participants of all backgrounds and ethnicity.

Considerations for participation

Know your audience. Different personality traits are associated with musical preference for particular styles and genres. A lot of people tend to like upbeat and conventional music, such as pop and country; as well as energetic and rhythmic music such as dance, soul and rap. Openness has a particularly strong association with reflective and complex music like classical, jazz and blues.

Musical preference may also involve perceived "fit" of music to a particular situation. Keep in mind you have a wide range of participants to captivate. We don't want to lose our elders' interest by singing and dancing to nursery rhymes every week, nor do we want to lose the interest of our younger population by playing songs they have never heard of before.

Activate participants with great songs. Look for upbeat songs that may appeal to both generations, songs that are fun and entertaining. Songs where you already know the dance moves such as 'YMCA' by The Village People. Songs that are uplifting and fun like 'Happy' by Pharrell Williams.

Songs from movies, why not try 'Dancing Queen' by ABBA, or 'I Like to Move It,' from the Madagascar movie? Songs that encourage movement such as 'The Nutbush' by Tina Turner. Familiar songs that are familiar across generations, such as 'Twist and Shout' by The Beatles. Songs that participants tell you are their favourites! Songs that link to the story you read at the welcome.

Remain aware of each person. It's important to be aware participants' physical and emotional wellbeing. Gauge body language, watch how they walk into the space, look at whether they require support to stand and move.

Dancing comes in many forms! Look into seated Zumba classes for some great options. Some movements can still be performed while seated or regressed to ensure everyone can still participate.

What to look for

Being active through dance offers a range of ways to wellbeing by connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving for children, parents/carers and older participants.

Children can:

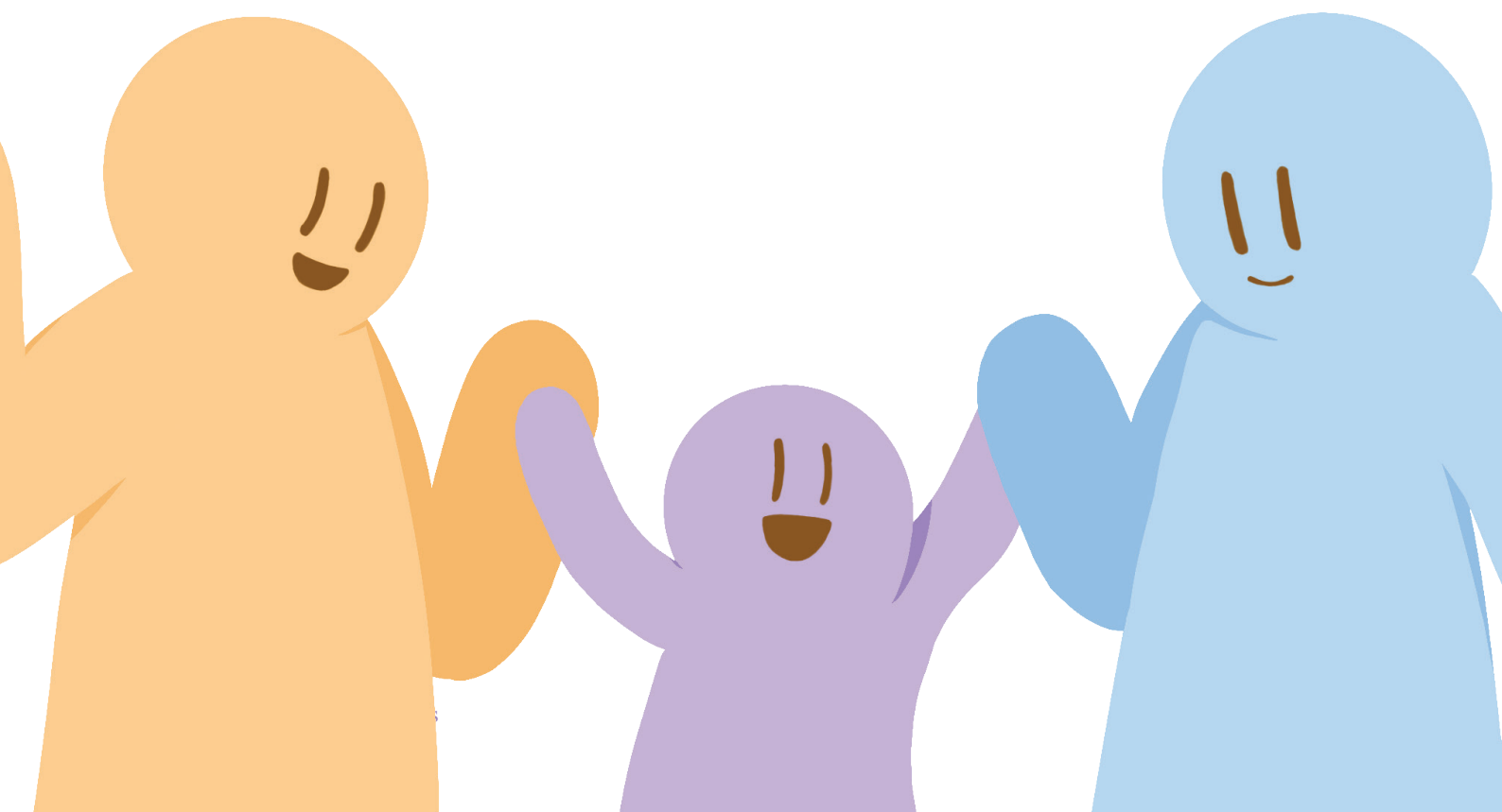
- Connect with others through social engagement and interaction and express themselves through dance in imaginative and playful ways.
- Take notice of the connections between music, their own responses and the responses of others.
- Be active through physical movement and playful interactions with a facilitator and others.
- Learn about different music styles, beats and rhythms and the breadth of ways we can respond.
- Give ideas about moves and actions as part of interactions between and among group members.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect socially with others, expressing themselves through dance in imaginative and playful ways.
- Take notice of themselves and others and the ways they engage with music through play.
- Be active through physical movement and playful interactions in response to different music styles and beats.
- Learn new physical movements and actions.
- Give support and encouragement to others, including their child, to participate and move.

Elders can:

- Connect through dancing with a group outside of their usual social networks to develop a sense of community.
- Take notice of their movement and learn about safe ways to move to prevent injuries, particularly falls.
- Be active by responding to music and increasing mobility, improving strength, balance and mobility, and ultimately greater control over their movement.
- Learn new moves and improve memory recall and cognitive skills.
- Give help and encouragement to others as they engage in dance.



Movement: Yoga

It's time to stretch your imagination through the power of yoga!

Yoga promotes health and wellbeing (physical, emotional, mental and social) through the practice of a variety of techniques, including postures and movement, awareness of the breath and breathing exercises, relaxation and attentiveness, and meditation. Increasing evidence supports yoga practices as a reasonably low-risk, high-gain method in improving overall health. Yoga is shown to support people managing depression, anxiety, or stress.

Yoga is associated with many physical and emotional benefits, including:

- body awareness
- coordination and balance
- flexibility and joint mobility
- posture and muscle development
- respiratory function and circulation
- digestion
- stronger immune system
- memory retention
- creativity
- concentration and listening skills
- healthy sleep patterns
- self-confidence
- mindfulness
- relaxation.

Note: While many forms of yoga practice are safe, some are challenging and may not be appropriate for everyone, so careful planning is key to success with yoga at an IGP.

Materials/suggested resources

Equipment

Yoga mats, sturdy chairs with arm rests for elders and parents/carers.

A big open space

Ensure there is sufficient space inside or out to lay out the required number of yoga mats. Position them with enough room for each participant to stretch their arms to each side without interfering with another participant.

Connect with story or a theme

Choose or create stories where you could use movements to complement the events and that require participants to help each other. Generic and simple yoga moves can be adapted to suit a story and may be adjusted to fit themes like animals, the garden, the zoo, the ocean, holiday themes such as Christmas or Halloween, or even the alphabet!

Internet resources can help you create movement patterns to suit your story. Here are some examples:

- **Staring up sun:** participants stand in a star position with arms outstretched and feet positioned wider than hips.
- **Walking the plank:** participants hold a plank position on the floor, or up against the wall. Allow time for children to try this movement, and elders to move to a wall if required.
- **Watching the rain fall down:** participants fold forward from the hips, either in a standing or seated position.

The activity

Start with a breathing and relaxation focus to help settle restless bodies and any nerves you notice. Set the scene for what is to come.

Introduce the story - your other facilitators can help here. Bringing stories to life with specially developed moves inspired by yoga combines an element of fun with exercise, participants go on wild adventures where they may roar like a lion, fly like a bird or blast into outer space! Reading the story encourages visualisation techniques; and helps establish or develop techniques in dealing with emotions, and feeling calm, focussed and relaxed.

Pause as the story is read and invite participants to respond through planned yoga poses. Show the pose and watch carefully so you can offer support and modify the activity as required. Encourage participants to help each other.

Finish the session by connecting back to that focused breathing, relaxation and awareness of self.

A note from Tracey (Exercise Physiologist)

It's great to work with other facilitators to connect yoga with story. In one of our playgroups we used the picturebook from Storytime, 'Row, Row, Row your Boat' by Matt Shanks. I matched the events and characters in the story with yoga moves to interpret their experiences and to act out the events in the story. This is how we introduced it to our participants.

"Today we are going to go on an adventure! We are going to read a story and I'm going to show you and encourage you to do some yoga movements so we can act out our story and think about the ways the characters are feeling. How does that sound?

Don't worry if you feel like the yoga actions are too hard, we will help you to do modified yoga. Now that everyone is on their yoga mat or in their yoga chair, we are going to start reading our story? Here we go!"

Our participants had a great time doing yoga. Some people lay on mats, some children lay on parents and carers, and some participated in yoga using vertical movements on our walls.

The story really brought purpose to the poses, and the yoga allowed our participants to relate to the story through focused physical activity play. For our participants, yoga was an opportunity to relax and become grounded.

Considerations for participation

Inclusion. Planning flexible sessions and maintaining a positive outlook will allow everyone to take part to their own ability. Ensure all yoga movements can also be performed while seated or regressed to ensure everyone can still participate.

Be aware of each participant physically and emotionally. Watch how participants walk into the space. Do they require support to stand and move? Because of its demands on agility, yoga may deter some elders from participating, so it is important for the facilitator to communicate clearly that movements can be regressed to suit all participants. Parents and carers are encouraged to participate with their children and also engage with elders when executing yoga movements.

Increase confidence. Activities that are flexible and allow participants to take part as best they can builds confidence. Through creative visualisation techniques, participants will believe they are unique and special.

Improve concentration. Balancing postures help participants focus their mind and require concentration to stay in the moment and complete the movement as best as possible

Have fun! There is a big emphasis on having fun in a yoga story class, participants can be taken on wild adventures and are encouraged to use their creative imagination while they benefit from movement.

What to look for

Yoga offers experiences that develop wellbeing for children, parents/carers and older participants through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect with others through focused tasks.
- Take notice of their body, its movements and stillness as they respond to the facilitator's instructions.
- Be active in participating in what is potentially a new experience by responding

to music and stories through the disciplined play of yoga.

- Learn to explore and control emotions through breathing and movement.
- Give encouragement and feedback to others as they take up (sometimes challenging!) yoga poses.

Parents and carers:

- Connect with others through a shared focused task.
- Take notice, give support and encouragement to their child and other group members as each person takes up yoga in individual ways.
- Be active in exploring new stretches, movements and stillness as a focused form of play.
- Learn to focus and reduce stress through controlled breathing and movement.
- Give support to others through encouragement and feedback about their developing yoga skills.

Elders can:

- Connect in a safe and supportive environment that offers modifications that enable all participants to participate in yoga.
- Take notice of the relationships between breathing, movement and stillness.
- Be active in exploring their strengths and limitations for yoga movement within a supported and safe environment.
- Learn modified yoga movements that allow elders to participate with younger participants, and to develop strength, balance and mobility.
- Give encouragement to others as they take up new knowledge about yoga.





Movement: Parachute games

A parachute is a great piece of play equipment that can be used to promote and encourage movement.

We hope the early childhood years include time running, jumping, sliding, swinging and playing. However, conventional physical activities compete with more sedentary behaviours through electronic devices, television and gaming playing. This collective shift from an active to a sedentary lifestyle is harmful to a person's health.

Playgroups and parachute play offer a return to more conventional physical activities that ultimately improve health outcomes for all. Wilmes and Wilmes (1985) 'Parachute Play' resource book begins with basic movements and then expands to more complex movements and games.

Parachute games promote cooperative, non-competitive play and support children in learning to take turns and share with peers. Many gross motor actions for children build muscles in the lower extremities more than the upper limb. And while many people might think parachute play is just for children, there are many benefits for elders and parents/carers as well.

Parachute play strengthens shoulder, arm and hand muscles. When participants work together to make the parachute rise they improve intuitive motor skills and develop rhythm. Parachute games can also incorporate opportunities to develop language.

Parachute play:

- Encourages cooperation between children, elders, parents and carers.
- Strengthens upper torso muscles.
- Engages participants in non-competitive play.
- Includes everyone, there are no pre requisites!
- Enhances perceptual skills.
- Supports sharing and taking turns.
- Develops rhythmic movement patterns.
- Requires following instructions, which focuses the participant on the activity.
- Promotes social connection.
- Encourages language development.

Movements with the parachute can create delightful and often calming scenes. A parachute can produce soft, soothing sounds or loud, undulated reverberations, determined by how quickly the parachute is moved.

Bright colours often seen on play parachutes can stimulate sensory components of the brain when using them. Parachutes play is a fun activity for children and adults.

Materials/suggested resources

A big open space

When weather permits, parachute play is great outdoors, but it can also be indoors. There needs to be enough room so participants can spread out evenly around the parachute and hold the edges. Participants need enough space in front of them to step toward the centre of the circle and behind them so other participants and the facilitator can walk behind.

A parachute

These are available in a range of sizes, so make sure you select one where all participants can fit around the circumference of the chute.

Other objects

Lightweight small coloured plastic balls or bean bags that can ‘pop’ around on the parachute as participants move it around. Make sure they are lightweight so no one gets hurt if one goes astray!

The activity

Start with the large parachute spread out on the ground and invite participants to stand evenly spaced around its circumference. It’s important at this point that the facilitator move participants to ensure even spacing and safety (e.g., the mix of participants of different heights).

Participants hold the edges of the parachute, lift it together. Start with small activities to get everyone used to the actions, the way the parachute moves and the ways the participants need to work together.

Start with lifting it up and down to capture the air, add some bouncing small balls on top, invite a participant (one at a time) to step in and move around underneath it.

The parachute is light and can be moved with ease. It offers enough resistance to provide strengthening work for the muscles of the upper body. Once the participants are comfortable, you can start to play!

Here are some games you could play:

All change

This is a great icebreaker activity that allows participants to get to know each other a little better.

Make sure everyone holds onto the parachute handles using both hands. As the participants lift the parachute, the facilitator (or someone else once the game becomes familiar) calls out a category or topic.

If the prompt applies to a participant, they step under the parachute and switch places with another person. Prompts can include birthday months (e.g., everyone with a birthday in January would step in), favourite foods or colours, if you have a pet or sibling and so on... Just be mindful of excited children and elders moving about at the same time.

Mushroom game

This is another game that requires everyone to move the parachute and work together.

Again, participants stand around the edges of the parachute, holding the handles with both hands.

On your prompt, everyone raises the parachute above their heads and after a loud count to three, everyone then brings the parachute down to the ground, to create a mushroom.

Ensure you check in with all participants to see if they can move through this range and provide seating where required. Repeat the lifting and lowering movements several times. The swishing and bright colours can stimulate many senses for children, elders and parents/carers alike.

You can also invite children and able elders and parent/carers to step inside the mushroom to create a canopy type cover. It creates much excitement for all involved.

Popcorn game

This game can be played as an enjoyable gross motor skill activity for participants, or perhaps as a competitive game for older children.

Participants stand around the edges of the parachute, holding with handles with both hands.

Place small coloured plastic balls or beanbags on the parachute and participants shake the parachute to move it up and down. The balls will look like popcorn popping!

As a competitive game between two teams: Place an equal amount of two coloured balls or beanbags on top of the parachute (e.g., ten blue and ten yellow items).

Divide participants into two teams who will move the parachute as before. One team attempts to keep the blue items on the parachute while the other tries to keep the yellow items on. The team with the last remaining item on the parachute wins. It is helpful to change members of teams around for each round to encourage interaction and sharing.

Other ideas

There are many other resources on the internet or local library for parachute play. One great resource is through Kids Activities: <https://kidactivities.net/games-parachute/>. Just remember to keep in mind the capacities of your participants when choosing your parachute game.

Considerations for participation

Seating. Ensure seating is available to any participant who may be at risk of falling. Movement can still be encouraged and executed while in a seated position. Look at reducing range of motion or slowing down movement to ensure all participants can play.

Safety. Ensure the games you choose can cater to all generations. Be mindful of who will move under and around the parachute and how you will ensure safety. For example, asking children and elders to run around the chute can lead to potential falls, so consider having only one person move around and under the chute at one time.



Inclusion. Be mindful of participants with additional needs and liaise closely with parents and carers to identify routines that are suitable to their individual needs. It's important to note that these needs may be sensory, physical, social, or emotional.

What to look for

Parachutes are great fun and offer opportunities for developing wellbeing in children, parents/carers and older participants through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect with participants to engage in non-competitive opportunities to ensure participation across generations.
- Take notice of the ways their actions (e.g., large arm movements, quicker movements) impact the parachute and therefore the play.
- Be active through gross motor physical play that requires group cooperation, and so develops self regulation, e.g., turn taking.
- Learn about coordinating movement together for a shared goal through language, taking turns and learning to follow.
- Give ideas and suggestions for different variations to the parachute play, e.g., swapping places by moving under the parachute, making a balloon cave.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with other participants and potentially to experiences from their own childhood with parachute play.
- Take notice of their child's responses to parachute play and their capacity to engage with peers and older participants.
- Be active through repetitive upper and lower limb movements that can stimulate and enhance sensory systems.
- Learn about new movement skills and the ways they impact different participants.
- Give to others by modifying movements and ensuring smaller and taller participants are able to take part.

Elders can:

- Connect with others within the parachute circle, encouraging a sense of community and integration through cooperative movement.
- Take notice of own movements (and potentially modified movements) with a focus on improving balance and reducing the risk of falls.
- Be active through repetitive movements that improve muscle strength in arms shoulders, core and lower limbs depending on the movement required.
- Learn to engage with a range of motions during coordinated parachute activities that enhance cognitive function.
- Give support and encouragement during parachute activities to develop a sense of the team.



Movement: Movin' and groovin'

There is a definite association between physical activity and increased positive health outcomes. While published physical activity guidelines offer formalised approaches to increasing physical activity, incidental movement is also an important source of movement and the benefits that come from it.

Incidental exercise leads to a reduced risk of developing some cancers and is beneficial in the treatment phase of specific cancers. Any activity is found to be beneficial in lowering the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Incidental exercise mildly reduces the risk of all forms of diabetes and can aid in the prevention of obesity by serving to increase metabolic rate and thermogenesis through reduced sitting time, although increased activity is more beneficial.

Mental health illnesses and disorders are best prevented through meeting the recommended guidelines, however incidental exercise may be an effective treatment. Elders appear to benefit the most from incidental activity as it incurs the lowest risk of injury and assists in the prevention of falls.

Incidental movement during IGP happens as you and the participants move from one activity to the next, or as a break from an activity, or perhaps even a spontaneous event that someone suggests! Such movements improve participants' mood and gets them movin' and groovin'!

Materials/suggested resources

Equipment

Consider fun items that could increase the playfulness while staying focused on the task and keeping everyone safe. For example:

- Small light beanbags and/or plastic balls
- Batons, short ribbons and so on for supporting a “march” to the next activity
- Simple props such as a hat or scarf
- Music to suit the theme of the session

The activity

Ensure IGP activities are spread out across the play space so there are lots of movement opportunities. There are lots of ways to move and groove from one activity to the next.

Here are some ideas:

High knee marching

Choose a marching song (we like ‘When the ants go marching in’) and invite participants to mimic the actions of the little one while marching. The words and movements are easily accessible on the internet. <https://kidsongs.com/lyrics/the-ants-go-marching.html/>

Alter movements to utilise different muscles

Dual task movements are encouraged, but ensure your participants feel safe and confident to do these before inviting them to participate. Some of these might include a lateral (side) step, hamstring curl steps (glute kicks) with overhead arm reach, or a forward step incorporated with arm reach to pull the participants forward.

Conga line

The Conga is a dance where people line up behind one another. They hold on to each other's shoulders or waists, and weave around a space moving their bodies to the music. Choice of music is key here. Gloria Estevan and Miami Sound Machine's fun song 'Conga' would work really well. The music leaves you with no option but to shake that booty!

Whistle blowers

Add some spice to the session by injecting a special movement that participants need to perform at the sound of a whistle. Be aware of the different capacities of your participants as you give your instructions. Movements could include: 5-10 squats or sit to stand movements, 10 high knee march on the spot, 10 star jumps or lateral steps, 10 punch outs.

Whistle blowers II

Instead of a whistle, you could use a certain piece of music that, when played, participants are encouraged to stand, or sit, and dance until the music stops.

Thematic movement

Think about incorporating small snippets of movement throughout the Playgroup gathering that fit in with the theme of the session. Some examples include:

The beach

Learning to swim. Ask participants about the sorts of clothing and equipment you might need when you go swimming. Invite them to imagine they are at the beach, pool or river and help them visualise themselves swimming. Start to execute some arm movements and encourage

them to join in. You could swim while standing or seated. Do all the strokes - freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly arms.

Surfing safari. What about swimming to some music? The Beach Boys' Surfin' Safari is the perfect choice to mimic paddling out behind the waves. Use big arm movements and visualise waves sweeping past you as you look for the perfect wave to catch.

Food

Hot potato. Food themes could be an inspiration for incidental movement. In hot potato, participants sit/stand in a circle and throw a small, round object like a soft ball, a beanbag or even a real potato may work to each other while music plays. When you stop the music, the participant who holds the 'hot potato' is required to sit out (be aware, especially of little ones who might feel upset at being excluded. Perhaps they can help you with the music). Lots of songs lend themselves to this incidental music, but The Wiggles 'Hot Potato' is a good one.

Outdoor/garden

Encourage participants to maintain gardens or plants established in previous IGP sessions, including watering and weeding plants. Garden maintenance encourages a sense of care, commitment and community when completed together, and also offers opportunities for incidental play.

Considerations for participation

Options. Have several options and remember to continuously review and assess participants' movement patterns to ensure optimal benefit. Be mindful this will be different for each participant depending on age, functionality and motivation.

Clean and pack up. Having participants help pack up at the end of each segments encourages movement and responsibility.

Morning tea. Look to have seating available, but only if really required. Standing is much preferred, if participants can tolerate this.

What to look for

Opportunities to move and groove promote wellbeing for children, their parents and carers and older participants through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect with peers and older participants through short bursts of movement and play.
- Take notice of the interpretations of others as a way of gathering new perspectives on play.
- Be active in short bursts that engage different muscle and ways of moving to express understandings through play.
- Learn to expand their imagination as they respond to ideas and prompts from stories and ideas.
- Give ideas and suggestions for ways to respond through song, dance, physical movement and so on.

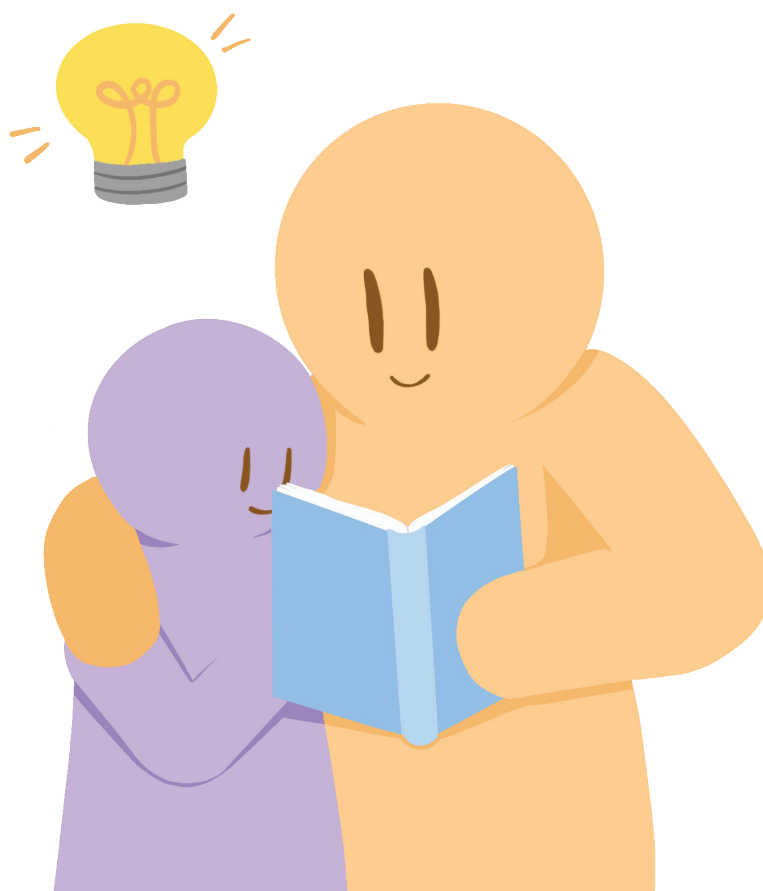
Parents and carers can:

- Connect with their own ideas about self expression through playful movements, perhaps from their own childhoods.

- Take notice of their own interactions with their children to understand how they might progress play in other settings, e.g., home.
- Be active in genuinely responding to prompts and the ideas of others for movement.
- Learn about intermittent physical activity as a way to engage themselves and their child in movement.
- Give support and encouragement to others as they share ideas for groovy movements.

Elders can:

- Connect with others through playful activities that are less overwhelming because they are brief and require only short bursts of movement.
- Take notice of the ways movement improves mental health and a sense of wellbeing.
- Be active in brief activities that may not be part of their regular activities with the view to increasing physical activity.
- Learn about incidental activities that will lower risk of falls and injury compared to those who live a sedentary lifestyle.
- Give help and encouragement to peers and younger participants so that everyone feels welcome and competent.



Scavenger hunt

Studies have shown that the field of physical education has changed with more of a focus on movement rather than fitness. Practices such as jogging, push ups and sit ups are not the primary focus and more creative and thoughtful sessions are being developed to make physical education more enjoyable, and inclusive.

A scavenger hunt is a game where participants must work in teams using a list of items or completing tasks to achieve a goal. Scavenger hunts are fun for people of all ages. They get people moving, learning and having fun together.

Materials/suggested resources

- A set of clues and prompts for participants to decipher and interpret
- Packing tape or string
- Scissors.

The activity

Plan your route and take time to set up.

Allow an hour to set up and map your route. Participants could have the hunt at the IGP venue, or even a local park (providing you've conducted a safety audit and considered issues related to mobility and access to all participants). Make sure you have an indoor and outdoor session planned in case of inclement weather.

Decide what sort of hunt you want. Perhaps you want participants to visit different areas of a park and take photos of the answers to your clues. Perhaps you have stashed items there that they bring back. Or perhaps the clues lead the group to a final destination. Once you know what sort of hunt you want, you will know what the clues will be like and where you will put them.

Establish clue locations. That huge oak tree in the park, the slide at the playground, the sandpit, or one of the other facilitators who might have participants complete a movement activity such as 10 star jumps before passing over the next clue.

A note from Tracey (Exercise Physiologist)

Often the clues in a hunt will be written in rhyme, making them fun to read and increasing that sense of playfulness.

Rhyming clues aren't always easy to write, so if you want to rhyme your clues, we recommend you take inspiration from the master of rhyme – Dr Seuss!

Nursery rhymes are also a rich site for rhyming, you could even use part of a nursery rhyme to begin your clue.

Here are some examples of clues to get you started:

- Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, what a funny fellow. Can you check behind the wall for something that is yellow? (hide an item there that's yellow)
- Twinkle twinkle little star way up in the sky. Can you find a soft white thing that helps a bird to fly? (feather)
- Tall and strong, I stay outside. The sun, the rain, they're by my side. I give homes to birds and air to you. Look at my base for something else too! (place an item under a tree)
- I'm in the kitchen, but you won't eat me, but Scruffy the dog sure loves me for tea! (dog food)
- I live in the dirt, but I'm beautiful too, you'll find me in colours, like red, pink, and blue. (flowers)
- I have 4 legs but cannot walk, but people rest on me to talk. (chair)
- Going outside? Wear me first! I'll protect your feet from the worst. (shoes)

Locations can be spread out, but make sure they're not so far apart that the group fractures with some racing ahead and others struggling to keep up.

Write the clues and place them in numbered envelopes. While the clues need to be accessible to all participants, you can skew them towards one age group over another so that everyone has a chance to be the expert. 8-10 clues are enough.

Place the clues in the locations. Secure the clues with the tape and string prior to participants' arrival – you don't want to be "sprung" hiding them! It's helpful to seal clues in plastic zip lock bags to ensure they are not damaged. Facilitators should print additional copies of clues in case any go missing before the hunt begins.

Incorporate random rewards to keep participants interested. At several stations, place little rewards for participants to collect. These could be popper drinks or a hand ball that children can collect if their team complete a certain movement.

Set ground rules in advance. This is a group activity. Children need to know to stay with their parent/carer and elder group, and to wait for each other before moving on to the next clue.

Considerations for participation

Interests. You have liberty with this game, so knowing participants' interests allows you to engage them in the game. For participants who like cooking, you could have clues that incorporate components of a recipe. For those who like numbers, you could have them find 2+2 balls.

Location. Changing locations from the usual IGP site has benefits for offering new experiences for participants. Sites like the local park or the beach provides different and potentially larger areas for clue locations. Be mindful of egress and access for elders when taking.

What to look for

Scavenger hunts are many and varied. Through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving, these activities can promote wellbeing for children, their parents and carers and older participants.

Children can:

- Connect with the concept of cumulative knowledge that leads to a goal through a playful collaborative experience.
- Take notice of older participants' reading and ways of resolving the puzzles.
- Be active in engaging with and remembering clues, following directions, moving creatively to clue sites and including others in the puzzle.
- Learn about teamwork, solving problems, negotiating, wondering, trial and error with a range of participants who bring different skills and perspectives to a task.
- Learn literacy, number and scientific thinking skills as they solve clues, e.g., identifying colours, shapes, textures, counting objects or steps between sites.
- Give ideas and suggestions for answers to the clues and give encouragement to others to move between tasks.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect and share ideas across generations about the nature of the task presented.
- Take notice of all participants and take opportunities to bring people together to work in a team.
- Be active in moving between clue sites in creative and physical ways.
- Learn new ways to think about play that develops literacy skills, problem solving and collaboration.
- Give help to others to manoeuvre through the course, find and decipher clues.

Elders can:

- Connect with the environment and the ways participants are using the space to engage in the playful hunting for items, and potentially to memories of playful hunts from childhood.
- Take notice of the creativity of others as they work to solve problems together.
- Be active in leading, communicating and interacting with the group to discover the answers to the clues.
- Learn from the more complex clues aimed at adults that require considerable thought and flexibility of thinking.
- Give help and share knowledge about deciphering codes and solving problems.





Portraits

A portrait is a painting, drawing or photograph of a person's face or head and shoulders. Creating a portrait requires the artist to connect with their subjects as they carefully take notice of their unique features and characteristics.

Portraits and life drawing are a major focus of formal art training. A high calibre activity such as this that uses fine art materials is a demonstration of respect for the participants, their stage of life and their experience. In this activity, participants are invited to partner up and draw their subject using artist quality materials. The simple act of handling of art-materials is physical, therapeutic and active.

Some participants may remember doing portraiture at school and may relish the opportunity to reminisce and discuss associated memories. For others, it will be their first time. Although the focus here is on the process of artmaking, the participants could come away with an artwork they are proud of. It could become a discussion piece in their home, a gift for another, a reminder of their connection and involvement in a community where they are valued.

Using observation to create an art response provides the opportunity for taking notice and seeing interactions between the generations. There will be eye-contact and extended periods of looking. Participants will be seen and heard, something all members of the community may at times feel is missing in their lives. Working side by side, giving to and helping others creates a dynamic of working towards something, of learning, and of a shared goal.

Materials/suggested resources

Materials must be of good quality, so the experience is not deemed 'childish'. This stance is more likely to be taken by an older child than an adult, so be mindful to scale up and make your planned activity a little bit challenging and interesting. The easiest way to do this is by using good quality materials. Parents/carers and elders will appreciate the challenge and the children will adapt and enjoy using new and exciting materials. It also provides the opportunity for the elder person to help and that is when the magic happens (that is, if they are not too focused on their artmaking).

Materials Considerations

Pencils	Graphite sketching pencils are best. Rubber/eraser. These are not all created equal, a pack with a range of softness is a good bet. Sharpener.
Charcoal	These will all break and everything will be a mess but if you do not mind that then this is a great tactile art-material to explore.
Pens	Fineliner drawing pens are best because you can achieve fine detail.
Ink	A lovely fluid alternative to paint and a little goes a long way. Keep it simple with black or go for a range of colours. Give the bottle a good shake before pouring. It is also water-based so it's easy to wipe up spills. Brushes – a range of sizes. Jars to hold ink and for dipping brushes (pour leftover ink back in the ink bottle, it'll be fine). Palettes or ice cream container lids will do.
Acrylic paints	These can be hard to apply. After pouring the paint on the palette, mix in pouring medium to thin it down and it will spread much more easily. Pouring medium. A range of brush sizes and types. Jars for dipping brushes. Palettes or ice cream container lids will do.
Portrait collages	Thinking outside the box, why not go for portrait collage? Old magazines. Scissors. Glue (Clag in the pot or glue sticks).

A quick note on paper. Let's just touch on paper quickly. Your participants will need paper for this and many other art activities. Any type of paper is fine for drawing with pencils and to a certain extent fineliner (pens) but test these out first to check the ink won't bleed.

If you are using ink then opt for a watercolour paper without too much texture, this ensures the paint brush glides across the paper.

For charcoal and paint use a sturdy paper with texture otherwise your charcoal will slide off and your paint will soak through.

As for size, I would not go for anything smaller than A4.

The table above provides some different materials and options to think about as you prepare.

A note from Ali (Artist and Art Educator)

To ensure your participants are going to use their observation skills say something like, "Now, you have probably all drawn a face before, so you will have a way that you draw eyes or a way that you draw a nose. I want you to forget everything you know and really focus on looking closely and draw exactly what you see."

Assure everyone that there is no rush, if they get half an hour in and have only drawn an eye then that is ok! Let everyone know that you are there to assist if anyone needs help. You can demonstrate first if you like, by drawing up a grid and making a quick sketch to show the group how to get started.

The activity

You will need at least half an hour for this task. If some people race through, then provide a fresh sheet of paper and suggest they try an alternate art material for a second portrait.

Partners (preferably child and adult) sit opposite one another. Try to alternate adult, child, adult, child side by side as well.

Ensure materials are accessible to all and then explain the aim of the activity, which is to draw each other! Explain that this is called drawing/painting a 'portrait' and the person we are drawing/painting is the 'subject'.

Let the group in on your process; "We are going to make art until 1pm so you have 45 minutes, but I'll let you know when we have 5 minutes left to make any last touches. After that we will show each other our beautiful artworks and then, if you like, you are welcome to share a little about how the experience was for you." This supports our participants to be mindful of anything they might like to share about the art-making process later.

Go for it! Some may be hesitant to make the first mark - a clean page can be very daunting! Be encouraging and explain there is no such thing as a mistake in art.

Time to share! Ask everyone to turn their paper around so the opposite row can see their portraits. This is a good time to invite participants to talk about their work. Some prompts could be:

- Which part did you find the hardest to draw?
- What part about your work do you like the best?
- What made you choose those colours?

Hopefully, this will start off the rest of the group to take turns sharing. But be aware about setting the expectation that everyone contributes to the talk. Art making can make some very self-conscious and that is OK! As the facilitator we are here to ensure a safe and non-judgemental space for art making.

A note from Ali (Artist and Art Educator)

Interpreting an artwork (what is that?)

I think we all remember a time where someone has proudly presented us an artwork only to leave us thinking...What is that? The following might help you to respond to these avant-garde feats of mastery that surpass your wildest expectations.

Firstly, remember that "What it is" does not matter, so try not to say; "Oh, I love it, what is it?" And try instead; "Wow! Can you tell me about what you have made?" Try handing it over to the artist. They just might shed light on the object in question.

You can follow up with a question about their technique, "I like this part here, how did you do that?" All these questions will help prompt a conversation about the artwork, which shows you are taking notice, taking the time to focus your attention on an artwork by a proud artist.

And react appropriately! Try to refrain from giggling at a drawing of Daddy with legs sticking out of his...is that a beard? And arms protruding from his forehead, as hard as that may be (trust me).

Our little artists take themselves seriously and we do not want to undermine their confidence in their own creativity. Similarly, ensure respect for art made by all ages. It can take a lot of courage to put pen to paper, especially in a group setting.

Encourage a kind dialogue when responding to art; this is not a time or place for 'constructive criticism', leave that to the masters in the art world.

Considerations for participation

Furniture. For the children, use chairs that suit the height of the table, even though they will all make a run for the big chairs, make sure you scoot them off to make way for the elders and parents/carers. Chairs with backs and arm rests are important for older people because they are supportive and, being at the right height for the table, conducive to making an art response.

Small tabletop easels are a great asset because they enable elders to participate without having to lean forward or over a table for extended periods. Easels can be angled low or to the side so the participant can see over/around to draw their subject opposite. It will also make up for ill-suited tables/chairs. If in doubt, suit the height of the table and chairs to the adults, the children will adapt regardless but an elder will not make a mark if they are experiencing discomfort.

Owning your art. Encourage everyone to make their own art response.

Often parents will fall into their usual role of assisting their child and therefore working together on the same page. Of course, no one has to make their own art response, but make sure they are invited to participate fully by having a separate piece of paper.

Even if they don't get a chance to concentrate on it much, it is good practise to extend the opportunity and ensure that we create an inclusive experience. On the other hand, they might continue to sit, have a chat and assist their child here and there and enjoy that fact that someone else is interacting with their child/ren.

Keep the purpose in mind. A well organised and engaging activity in a planned, accessible and safe setting allows participants take care of the rest. Look out for smiles, conversation and collaboration in some, and an intense focus on artmaking in others. Portraiture can afford the making of connections that are easily picked up again in subsequent sessions.



What to look for

Activating our creativity and imagination offer ways to wellbeing for children, their parents and carers and older participants through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

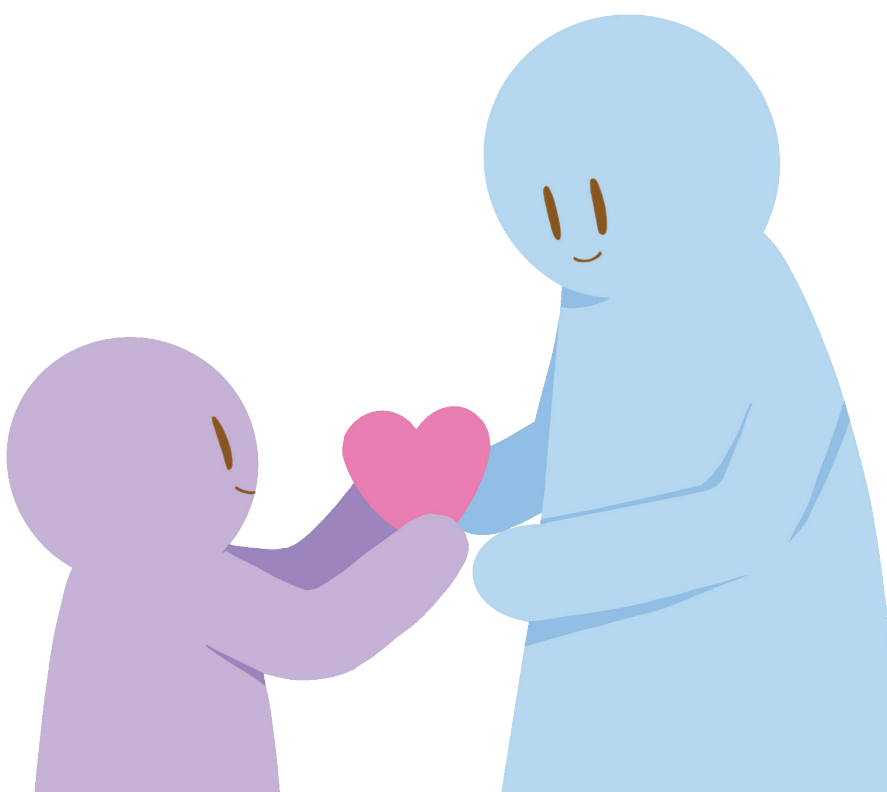
- Connect with the subject of their artwork as they study and interpret what they see.
- Take notice of individual features of their subject and the ways these are translated onto the canvas.
- Be active in developing self regulation through sharing, remaining seated and focused on the activity.
- Learn and develop language skills through technical words that describe the processes of creating a portrait and fine motor skills handling art materials.
- Give encouragement and feedback when they are the subject sitting for and then viewing a portrait of themselves.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect and socialise during a closely focused and extended activity that invites the growth of relationships.
- Take notice of their own creativity and the benefits of mindful art-practise.
- Be active in careful observation of another person and the ways their observations are translated onto canvas.
- Learn new skills and new activities to try at home.
- Give knowledge and skills to others about portrait painting.

Elders can:

- Connect through opportunities to socialise focused on observing people and being creative.
- Take notice of their actions and interactions through mindful art-practise.
- Be active in observing facial and bodily features of others and translating these observations through portraiture.
- Learn, maintain and improve fine-motor skills and range of motions.
- Give help to others by demonstrating techniques and assisting skill development.





Collage

A collage is a piece of art made by arranging various materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric onto a backing. Collage is a fantastic introduction to art making as a group. Even with the bare minimum of materials this activity is a winner with any age group.

Younger participants will love the chance to use scissors and get messy with glue. And due to this there will be many opportunities for our elder participants to lend a hand. There is no expectation to create a beautiful piece of art when exploring collage; it is all about the process. If some masterpieces are created, then that is a bonus!

We see the Five Ways to Wellbeing across this activity in the group dynamic. For example, children might need help incorporating some cut-out text into their collage. Elder participants might take some design advice from a 4-year-old.

Plenty of sharing opportunities present themselves with the materials; “Does anyone need a picture of a dog?”, “Can you please pass me the glue?”

Parents and carers may learn new skills to recreate a similar experience at home. They may delight in observing their child exhibit skills they were not yet aware of! For instance, children often come home from daycare/ preschool having chopped up vegetables or learnt to use scissors and it may not have occurred to the parents/carer that it is something they could try at home!

You are guaranteed to have a varied bunch of collages. No two will ever look alike and it will be a lot of fun for the group to look around and see each other’s work come to life. If you can sit around one table, you could even work together on the one artwork, staying connected as a group and on the page.

Materials/suggested resources

You really do not need much but you will need the following:

- Magazines (the older they are the more entertaining).
- Scissors (big ones and small ones).
- Glue (clag in the pot or glue sticks) OR PVA glue in which case you will need brushes and jars.
- Paper or card.
- Extra time at the end? Crayons or textas (for all those little gaps).

The role of artists' assistant (aka the facilitator)

When a participant asks for help be mindful and take care with how you approach their artwork. For example, a participant may want your expert help to draw something. Firstly, try and offer careful direction. If that doesn't satisfy, make sure you ask before you make a mark on their work and then try to keep it to a minimum. Let them guide your pencil. You may have very different ideas about how you think it should look.

Facilitation or participation?

Why not both? Connection is one of our main goals. Once the group is settled and working on their art response, instead of hovering, try sitting down with the group. Unless there is something you need to be doing, enjoy being another participant for a while. Moments without direction can be a perfect space for participants to connect.

The activity

The beauty of this task is that it can be as long or brief as needed. At a minimum allow 20 minutes but it could entertain a group for an hour. If anyone finishes early, ask if they would like to turn their collage into a card and provide some textas so they can write inside it. The card could be given to someone special in the group!

Ensure materials are accessible to all and then explain the aim of the activity; "Can everyone reach everything? Okay, we're making collages!

A collage is when we make a new piece of art from cutting or tearing paper and rearranging it." Let everyone know that you are there to assist if anyone needs help.

Make sure you tell the group how long they've got. This helps people relax and pace themselves and saves you from everyone finishing too early! "We are going to make art until 1pm so you have 45 minutes, but I'll let you know when we have 5 minutes left to make any last touches. Then we might do a bit of a presentation". This supports our participants to be mindful of anything they might like to share about the art-making process later.

Go for it! There is no daunting clean page in this case, so most participants will get stuck into their cutting and won't need too much help from you. You might need to refocus the parents/carers and elders! "I'm sure that magazine from 2006 has lots of good gossip in it but this is not a reading group ladies and gentlemen! How are those collages coming along?"

Younger participants are going to need some help with this task, try and redirect some helping hands where you can, the goal is for everyone to finish at around about the same time. Children under 4 probably won't be able to cut out their desired pictures and might get a little frustrated at this; "You're making it look too easy Cheryl, do you think you could give Ollie a hand cutting out this Dalmatian?"

Time to share! Ask for any volunteers who might like to share their art-making process and tell us a little about their work. Some prompts could be:

- Why did you choose the pictures you have?
- What part about your work do you like the best?
- I can see you have a colour theme. Can you tell us about that?

This may prompt the rest of the group to start sharing by turn or it may turn into more of a conversation and that is perfectly fine too. Avoid putting anyone in the limelight if they are happy to sit back. Unless you are going over time just let this conversation happen, it is in these undirected moments that a lot of the magic of an IGP can happen.

If you have finished before time, why not ask your participants to help you with the clean up? I assure you, it will be a big job. Your 3-year olds will have cut three thousand tiny triangles and they will be all over the floor.

Considerations for participation

Awkward! Do a quick check and make sure your magazine stash is kid appropriate; we don't need our 6 year olds coming across "Celebrity breast implant disasters revealed!" Do a quick filter and rip a page out here and there if needed.

Seating. Try and seat the group alternating adult, child, adult and so on.

Tools. For a participant struggling with scissors, demonstrate tearing around an image in the magazine and gluing it down. They will love the novelty of being allowed to tear something, especially something that looks like it should not be torn. Let them at it and it will add even more character to the collage.

Add a theme! Give the group or any members interested an extra element to focus on to create their collage. Have an idea prepared. Consider deriving a theme from the book you are reading during the intergenerational playgroup. "Your bonus challenge is to create a collage of any animal from 'Wombat Stew'!". The slow starters will love some direction; "Anyone need some ideas? Who wants a theme to help you get started? How about you create a 'Wombat Stew' themed collage?" Make sure the group members know the theme is completely optional, we do not want to thwart anyone's creative genius.

What to look for

With its focus on working as a team, collage promotes wellbeing for children, their parents and carers and older participants through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect through interactions as part of a cross generational team to plan and produce a group collage.

- Take notice of the ways others work with materials in creative ways with a focus on the specific requirements of collage.
- Be active in developing fine motor skills (e.g., scissor work, gluing) and self regulation (e.g., developing and carrying out a plan, staying on task).
- Learn literacy skills related to working with texts, reading print, negotiating and collaborating with others to identify suitable content for a collage.
- Give ideas, knowledge and help to others as ideas are considered and tasks carried out.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect through creativity and teamwork through a group task.
- Take notice of interactions with children and elders and how much they have to offer each other with a view to engaging with elders in home and family contexts.
- Be active in supporting others and developing connections across generations.
- Learn new ways of being creative and resourceful in developing a shared artwork.
- Give help, ideas and support to others, perhaps physically for older and younger participants.

Elders can:

- Connect with others, perhaps in an art-practice they have never experienced, or something not taken up in many years...or perhaps they are an expert in collage!
- Take notice and learn about the ways others conceive collage as an act of play and creativity.
- Be active in participating in the group collaboration and decision making processes for the creation of a group collage.
- Give knowledge, ideas and insights into collage and the ways images combine and intersect to create an image made of multiple individual images.

Clay

Clay has been used over many centuries to build and create items for carrying and storing things in homes, for building, and for expressing creativity. As a natural material that's squishy and tactile, clay offers many opportunities for play. Working with clay! Watch faces light up when you announce to the group that you will be working with clay today. Use air-dry clay, unless you are fortunate enough to have access to a kiln to fire clay, in which case you could opt for earthenware clay. For the purpose of this activity air-dry clay is perfectly fine. This medium is very user friendly and popular with experts and beginners alike. It will get your group active without even realising it, all the while using their creative side to form bowls, cups, figurines, flowers, beads, bangles; the options are endless.

You can encourage the group to reflect on a time they may have used clay in the past. As an art form that is steeped in history and appreciated widely across cultures, there may be some fascinating stories to hear.

Working with clay is a mindful task. It can completely absorb the maker and time can dissolve. If you can relate to that feeling, you will know it is a beautiful place to be, so if you get the feeling some participants are in that zone, that is fine!

Let them carry on becoming one with the process. You may even have a hard time transitioning some participants to the next planned activity because they are so thoroughly involved in their work. This is also fine! Those who wish to carry on can do so while the others transition to the next activity, providing both tasks are able to be supervised and it is safe to do so. We do not want anyone having a little clay snack while you are not looking!

Materials/suggested resources

This activity is fairly easy to prepare for. Other than the clay there are a few other materials I would suggest you provide:

- Air-dry clay.
- Some ice cream containers or paper plates to transport artworks home.

Optional Extras:

- Fishing line (for slicing through clay).
- Rolling pin.
- Plastic knives.
- Tooth picks, googly eyes or any various craft items to embellish objects.



The activity

You will not want to be in a rush for this one, allow yourself at least 30 minutes. Watch as objects are created and then scrapped and recreated. There might be some who are very productive and line up object after object. Another participant might reform the same lump of clay for three quarters of an hour only to quickly shape and settle on a form in the last 5 minutes.

Everyone will have a different process, enjoy observing the variations in their approach and final objects. I should note that some might not produce anything at all and lump their clay back into the packet at the end of the session, do not fret, it is all about the experience.

Work on a clean, dry surface so little stray grains of sand/discarded staples/pencil shavings on the table do not embed themselves in the clay.

Start by distributing clay among the participants evenly. If you have multiple packets of clay, just open one at a time until used before moving on to the next, opened unused clay cannot be stored very well.

Ask your group if they have ever used clay, ask about what they have made and prompt imaginations through discussion of the medium. You will all be kneading clay at this stage to warm it through until it become pliable. Little smooth hands and big wrinkly hands may need help with this to get them going.

You can then start demonstrating some techniques; rolling out a snake to twirl into a cup or small bowl, pinching a pot, rolling out clay with a rolling pin, cutting it with the knife, spinning a ball in between your hands.

Try to encourage participants to use clay wisely as larger, thicker works take longer to dry. Aim for small objects. Encourage using the toothpicks or anything else you have supplied to embellish them with.

Make sure you give everyone a warning at the 5-minute mark before time is up so that everyone can make their last-minute adjustments. Clay objects can now be placed

in their vessels to be transported home unless you are lucky enough to be working from a space where you can leave them to dry. Dry time is anywhere between 24-72 hours depending on how thick objects are. Any discarded clay or dried up bits should go into the bin and not down the sink, where it may clog the pipes!

If you can leave the objects in the space until the following playgroup or manage to arrange everyone to bring them back again, the next art activity could be painting and embellishing the forms. Acrylic paint is best, you could also use PVA glue to stick on beads, sequins or anything you like!

Bonus task

If you would like to extend this task, offer the option to plan on paper before working with clay. It is an extra challenge some might enjoy. The plans will probably go out the window once the clay is in hand, but it is a good way to introduce the activity and get your participants warmed up and thinking creatively.

Considerations for participation

Sensory considerations. The tactile and messy nature of some tasks do not appeal to everybody. Better to be prepared just in case. Paper and pencils are a fail-safe. Ask if they would like to do a still-life drawing. You can suggest they choose an object that one of their fellow participants has made (with permission) and observe and draw it.

Manipulating the clay. It can take some time and strength to get clay warmed up and workable. Some hands might struggle. Take note of anyone experiencing pain or difficulty and offer to step in and help. Reassure them that once warmed it will be much easier to form. Another alternative is to act as their artist's assistant and ask them to creatively direct your hands to form the clay to their specifications.

Owning their art. Encourage parents and carers to take a break from the assistant role and spend time forming shapes with clay themselves. You can give them a break and step in to help their child for a while if needed.

Connect with the creativity of the group.

Looking for more creative activity ideas? Ask the group! They might have some goals but are unsure whether to ask.

Invite your IGP to mention anything they might like to do in the future and make sure you jot it down. Painting with gold leaf might be a stretch but work with participants to shortlist ideas for the following playgroups.

This involvement in the planning process and insight into the coming sessions will give your participants so much to look forward to.

What to look for

Tactile experiences with clay allow parents and carers and older participants to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give that offer ways to wellbeing.

Children can:

- Connect with others as they explore and experience the tactile experience of working with clay.
- Take notice of the ways the clay feels and changes to their touch.
- Be active in developing their ideas, experimenting, moulding and manipulating the clay to achieve a goal.
- Learn to be creative and imaginative where the material (clay) is a limited resource.
- Learn self regulation, e.g., sharing, being considerate of the access of others to materials, being patient and persistent.
- Give ideas as part of a group while exploring personal goals for their creation.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with others - with hands busy and the mind free this is a time to enjoy being with the group.
- Take notice of the relaxing and soothing benefits of manipulating clay for themselves and their child.
- Be active in exploring the potential and limitations of clay as an art medium.
- Learn about and experiment with the properties of clay for making and creating.

- Give help and encouragement to others as they work with the clay, perhaps offering physical assistance to get the clay warmed up and moving for younger and older hands.

Elders can:

- Connect through conversations, make links to related experiences (e.g., kneading dough, making biscuits, mixing cement!) and activities beyond the playgroup.
- Take notice of the ways clay moves to the touch, using focus and coordination to bring an idea to life.
- Be active in the physical task of working with and manipulating clay.
- Learn about the properties of clay as a medium for making and creating.
- Give ideas and encouragement to others, particularly connecting with the ideas and approaches of children.

Collaborative art activity: River of rocks

Collaborative artworks draw on a group's collective creativity and energy to create a single work. Their shared goal offers opportunities to build a sense of community and connectedness. Collaborating on a shared artwork will create a shared goal and common sense of purpose. There are many ways we can do this, mosaic, painting on a large canvas or multiple canvases, weaving paper, working on separate paper-based artworks and then bringing them together to form a large collage, paper crane mobiles, mandalas, there are many ideas.

Consider the best materials for your IGP. Look to tie in other experiences that are a part of your playgroup to form a theme. Perhaps during story time some participants really enjoyed the illustrations from a particular book. Draw from this feedback to guide you when suggesting a theme and for ideas for future art experiences.

The example shared here is the process of painting a 'river of rocks', a great activity for an IGP as it will suit all levels of experience and ability. The group will paint their own rock/s and then arrange them together outside to form a river effect. They will make a striking addition to a garden bed that your playgroup members can admire for years to come and maybe even add to down the track.

How about a fairy door on the tree? Some hand painted gnomes? Focusing on a garden can tie in other activities you do as part of your IGP; like planting sunflowers and watching them grow as the weeks pass.

Materials/suggested resources

River rocks. Large flat smooth rocks are what you are looking for and your local hardware store is the best place to acquire them.

I know what you are thinking and no, don't gather these at the beach/river. It is, in fact, illegal to remove rocks/sand/soil from beaches and National Parks. Good to know!

Other materials you will need include:

- Acrylic paint or POSCA paint pens.
- Spray sealer to waterproof rocks.

- Paint brushes.
- Jars for water.
- Palettes or ice cream containers/lids for paint.

Optional extras:

- Embellishment items/craft items to decorate rocks (I love googly eyes).
- PVA glue.

The activity

This activity could be broken into two 15-minute parts, before and after morning tea for example, which leaves time for paint to dry in between.

Explain your activity! "We are painting a river of rocks! We are going to be doing a bit of creative landscaping today by painting rocks and arranging them outside to look like a river."

Have an image on hand to show your playgroup what you mean - a quick online image search should do the trick to inspire your participants.

Take your playgroup on a little reconnaissance walk outside and together locate a suitable area for your river. This will get everyone excited, and it is nice for them to have the opportunity to visualise the outcome.

Have plenty of rocks to go around! I am confident most participants will want to paint more than one. This task is great for those who struggle with mobility because the rock can be held in one hand and painted with the other, avoiding the problem of leaning over the rock on the table. Textas would be even easier.

Once you have an array of beautiful rocks completed, let them dry. This will not take too long. If you can, spend some time on another activity and then come back to it.

Ask your participants to carry their rocks outside to your previously decided location and let them arrange as they wish.

This may take some time and they may even decide that this spot is no good and try somewhere else. No problem!

Once the rocks are all settled, take out your spray sealant and ask everyone to stand back a little bit. Give each rock a coat to ensure they are waterproof.

Admire your river of rocks!

Give it a name! Brainstorm a suitable name for your river. Not only does this inspire creativity and imagination, it also represents symbolic cohesion for your IGP.

Possible variations

Other collaborative artworks. A painted mural will require a planning session to brainstorm materials and ideas/themes. Do a rough smaller-scale pencil draft to refer to when moving onto the canvas/paper/wall. Remember to start with the background and move to the foreground, letting each layer dry sufficiently in between. You will need bigger brushes/rollers unless you want to practise your pointillism techniques. Explore non-toxic house paint options for large surfaces such as walls or very large canvases.

Considerations for participation

Collaborative artworks can get messy. Consider have some aprons on hand for adult participants and encourage parents/carers to bring a too big shirt to go over the top of children's clothing.

Acknowledge individual needs. A participant may be still learning to share and collaborate, or perhaps their movement is compromised, and so a single group product is difficult. Consider ways to have "take out" parts of an artwork that can be returned to the full artwork later e.g., the garden on a group collage could be made separately, or a specific part of a larger work could be accessed while seated.

Connect with home activities. Experiencing collaborative artworks at playgroup may offer insights for parents/carers into the ways they facilitate creative experiences in their homes with groups of children such as siblings, cousins, friends and so on. Parents/carers can learn about supporting the development of skills such as sharing, negotiation, collaborating, compromising and problem-solving in their own children.

Keep the purpose in mind. Choose a collaborative art-based activity to get the group communicating and working towards a common goal. Collaborative art can take place over several weeks depending on the scale of your endeavour. Encourage the group to be involved in the planning, engage in experimentation and play and lastly help out to clean-up! Remember to give your children some jobs, most children love being given an important job to do. Observe and encourage the group to praise each other's achievements, a collaborative artwork will provide many moments of meaningful connection.

What to look for

Collaborative art activities bring children, their parents and carers and older participants together, promoting wellbeing through connections, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect with others and work to coordinate a plan for the creation of a shared art piece.
- Take notice of the ways others work, solve problems and achieve their goals as a way to understand the nature of a shared goal.
- Be active in working on individual parts with a view of the whole piece.
- Learn self regulation e.g., turn taking, negotiating, compromise.
- Give help and ideas throughout the planning, activating and final instalment of the collaborative art piece.

Adults and carers can:

- Connect through a shared interest, enthusiasm and curiosity for a collaborative task.
- Take notice of the ways play and exploration interact as the group develops the concept of the shared task.
- Be active in participating, creating, and responding to the needs of others through action.
- Learn and respond to an exciting and innovate art based experience as a participant (as opposed to supervisor of child/ren).
- Give ideas, encouragement and perhaps physical support to others as they develop their ideas and work towards the shared goal.

Elders can:

- Connect through a shared goal and develop a sense of worth and purpose.
- Take notice of the interactions between and among the group as they solve problems and collaborate on the shared goal.
- Be active in contributing to the knowledge and products of the group.
- Learn new (or long forgotten) art skills and means of self expression.
- Give help to others, share expertise and offer feedback on the group's progress towards the shared goal.



Recycled art

Some artists take materials that others no longer want and use them in their artworks – recycled art. They gather up old toys, fabrics, knick-knacks, beads, buttons and even large items like tractor wheels and turn them into something creative and new.

This activity will guide you to facilitate an IGP where the participants will create their own necklaces/hats/masks...whatever they decide!

Give them some ideas, and encourage them to think creatively and experiment with everyday items as they create recycled wearable art. The playgroup will enjoy the experience to adorn themselves, or each other, in their beautiful creations!

Materials/suggested resources

This list is broken into two parts, the first will list craft items that can be sourced from an art and craft store. The second is items that can be collected from home and recycled into art (as above).

Purchased items

- Cotton cord/string/twine/ribbon (all of these are good options, allocate about a metre per participant to ensure you have more than enough)
- Scissors
- Sticky tape
- Coloured textas.

Recycled Items

- Buttons
- Cardboard toilet roll cylinders
- Beads
- Shells
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Ribbon
- Alternative materials.

Go for a walk with your playgroup to collect leaves, flowers, seeds, pinecones or anything that takes their fancy. These can then be threaded onto string to create necklaces/crowns/bracelets made from organic material! Make sure you remind them to take a photo of it because they won't last forever.

Resources from home

If you can, tell your playgroup about this art activity prior to it taking place in case they can contribute some materials from home. Discuss the sorts of items needed, for example:

- Buttons
- Cardboard toilet roll cylinders
- Beads
- Shells
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Ribbon
- Paper plates.
- Or whatever they can think of that are not listed here.

Have enough of these items ready for your activity to take place, just in case, but if the group also brings items, that is a bonus!

The activity

Hopefully the playgroup will have an idea of what is happening today and have brought in some objects from home to re-purpose. If not, well done for supplying everything!

Explain the idea, "We are going to reuse these items that would normally end up in our bins and, using our creativity, see what we can turn them into."

Remind your playgroup of all the ideas they have and that they might even come up with some more. "What you make today is up to you! I can help you to make masks or hats, we can thread objects to make necklaces or bracelets and if you have any other ideas go for it!"

Can anyone think of anything else they would like to make?"

Demonstrate re-purposing some items, for example:

- Toilet rolls can be cut across to make round "beads". Use textas to colour them in and then thread them onto string and you have a giant colourful necklace!
- Hold a paper plate up to your face to show that it would make a great mask if there are two holes cut out for eyes.
- Newspaper can be cut into triangles and stuck around the plate edges as decoration.
- Newspaper can be formed into hats and then decorated.

Since this activity is fairly open, as the facilitator you can sit with the group and engage in the process with them. You and the playgroup will enjoy being on the same level and working together. You can still help where needed.

Ask the group how they would feel about having a parade! You could even incorporate it into the playgroup as your next activity. A parade in your new creations accompanied by music will get you moving.

Possible variations

Have an exhibition! Create a stunning display of all your IGP artworks. This will be a rewarding and affirming event. If you can involve your playgroup in the process, then even better! Ideally, use your playgroup space, but if not, perhaps approach the residential age care facility where some of your participants reside, tying these communities together and creating a focal point of social cohesion. If this is not possible try a local venue such as a library, community hall, the school from which some of your participants might attend. If visiting these destinations is difficult for your members, take photos to show your playgroup and explain the beauty of the community being able to appreciate the occurrence of an intergenerational playgroup within their area; you may even acquire some new members!

Masks. A text such as 'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendak or similar offers an

inspirational springboard for participants to create their own "wild" masks! This theme is a fun, relaxed craft experience, so encourage experimentation. Be warned, though, there will be some who sit and think for a while and others who launch in and create every item on the ideas list! A non-directed theme is also good because it creates space for conversations, creativity and connections. As participants are not following a step-by-step process they can relax and enjoy where their own process takes them. Ideally facilitators will not need to interrupt conversations to give instructions, and you can watch the organic process of your group as they explore the materials.

Another idea. There are fantastic craft ideas to discover that primarily use ordinary, everyday, recycled objects such as milk cartons, egg cartons and so on. Extra egg cartons could be used to plant seedlings in and watch them grow. It can later be cut apart and planted straight into the ground as the cardboard will break down in the soil as the plants grows. Sunflowers are a great choice as they are fast growing, and your playgroup will be rewarded with a beautiful flower display.

Considerations for participation

A non-directed activity. This is better suited to smaller and more established playgroups and would make a good end of term idea. For early sessions and new participants, a structure within the art activity is more supportive of the development of relationships and making connections. Adapt the idea and just make one of the items from the list.

Levels of assistance. Children may be more at ease with the unstructured nature of this activity than our elders and parents/carers, and so encouragement will be useful. Assistance may be required for participants handling some of the materials and for opening their minds to the possibilities for different outcomes. Remember to listen carefully to the participant's directions and carry out what their hands cannot manage, then hand it back over as soon as you think they can manage without you! We do not want to make things too easy.

Abilities. Consider the abilities of your participants when you are offering options. Too many can be confusing. It may suit your group better to work on one of the ideas from above, such as threading necklaces together at the same pace.

Children as experts. Encourage your elders and parents/carers to play and experiment; they might be a little out of practise! Remind them that they can always ask the children for help and ideas!

Keep the purpose in mind. This activity provides space for connection through a relaxed and craft based activity. A participant can go at their own speed and either make something tiny, because they were too busy having a great chat across the table or focused their energy on something elaborate. The (possibly impromptu) parade at the end is a great way to showcase their creations, giving them the opportunity to get moving again and appreciate each other's hard work. It also makes a great way to transition your group into the next activity, which can sometimes be a challenge.

What to look for

The satisfying and sustaining act of recycling itself promotes wellbeing. When combined with playfulness and creativity through recycled art, opportunities emerge to connect, be active, take notice, learn, and give for children, their parents and carers and older participants.

Children can:

- Connect with the group in playful ways to reimagine outcomes for items perhaps only previously seen in the recycling bin.
- Take notice of the ways older participants examine and explore the potential for 'rubbish' to be art.
- Be active in exercising spontaneity, creativity and inspiration in response to 'What if...' statements.
- Learn divergent thinking that explores possibilities and solutions to art based problems, while also learning about the need to use less and recycle/resuse more.
- Give ideas as a creative advisor to others.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect with others across generations to consider concepts of reducing, reusing and recycling in creative and imaginative ways.
- Take notice of the possibilities for recyclables not only for art, but also as practical resources to support the activity (e.g., Milk cartons cut in half make useful water and brush holders, yogurt and ice cream lids make great palettes).
- Be active in imagining and exploring creative solutions as part of the group's art based play.
- Learn from others, the unique and unrestrained perspectives of the very young, the wisdom and extended experience of elders and the ideas and creativities of their own peers.
- Give ideas and strategies to others who may struggle to see the value of 'rubbish' as art.

Elders can:

- Connect with others through their own experiences re-purposing items over time, potentially out of necessity but also for creativity.
- Take notice of the ways others view recyclables and the ways they imagine them as art.
- Be active in offering and trying out different ideas, reflecting and modifying original aims in response to the ways the materials respond.
- Learn from others and learn about the properties of the materials for achieving goals.
- Give advice, help and encouragement to others as they explore and innovate on the plan.

Celebrating and reflecting

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Helen Keller

It's the end of our playgroup session so what do we do? We come together to celebrate our successes and reflect on what we did and what we will do together in the future... and of course we say goodbye. By doing this we are building relationships and connections with each other, individually and as a group.

We are creating ownership of the group for all participants. And we are enhancing self-worth, purpose and a sense of belonging. We are being respectful to each other and appreciating individual and group ideas and contributions.

We are taking notice of what we and others enjoyed and where we were successful and recognising the learning that has occurred. We are giving encouragement and gratitude for the play, the session as a whole and our time together.

Materials/suggested resources

Materials and resources depend on what has happened within the session. It may be showing off the artworks we completed, revisiting a dance move we learnt, sharing another story based on the same theme, or simply chatting about our session and what we would like to do next time.

The activity

Transitioning. Your IGP session will have a time limit and it is vital that you finish when you have said you would. This shows respect for all those who are participating. Try to wrap up the final experience about 5-10 minutes before the end of the session so you have time to celebrate and reflect. Do this with a little warning, "In 5 minutes we will be moving on/ or finishing up here." Instead of using your voice you could also have a recognised sound which the group understands is a change of activity.

Bring the group together. Celebrating and reflecting is an important time for all so have a place to gather, perhaps the place where all the fun started. Make sure there are size appropriate

chairs and cushions with ample space for everyone.

Celebrating. This is the time to 'show off' and celebrate our achievements. This might be individual or whole group art works. It may be our playdough creations or collage masterpieces. It will depend on what happened in the session. You could encourage participants to applaud or comment on what they liked about each other's work boosting self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Reflecting. Take the time to look back on the session and forward to the next one.

- "What did you enjoy today, (name)?"
- "Next time you come, what would you like to do at playgroup?"
- "Do you have a book or a song you would like to share next time we meet?"
- "Was there anything you didn't like doing today?" Make adjustments for future playgroups.

Share information about the next session. Tell the group about what's going to happen, e.g., "Next time we will focus on our families, so could you please bring a photo of your family to share."

Revisit something we learnt. Remind participants of what has occurred and invite a quick flashback to that fun, e.g., "Let's do that dance again."

Say goodbye. It's respectful to say goodbye to the whole group and you can do this by suggesting we give each other a wave, a hug or simply say goodbye to each other. You may have a special goodbye song that you could sing or if you have some musical talent yourself or in your group you may compose one yourselves. You will notice as relationships form that people will begin to seek out others to say goodbye and this is wonderful to observe as a facilitator.

Considerations for participation

Not everyone may join in and that's OK.

Remember again that some may want to finish off what they are doing or prefer not to join in. Some will want to help clean up. Some children and parents/carers may just want to go home, they may have had enough by then and that's OK too.... just ensure you say goodbye.

Sometimes it may be quick. You may have run out of time. Or the group is restless to leave. Be mindful of your group and respond accordingly.

Don't rush. Allow those who want to linger the time to do so. There may be some important conversations to be had. Some elders may be going home to an empty home and want this session and their connection with others to last as long as they can.

What to look for

IGPs that make time for celebration and reflection on the play offer a range of benefits for children, their parents and carers and older participants. The sense of achievement, a job well done, and a view to the future is achieved through connecting, being active, taking notice, learning, and giving.

Children can:

- Connect by developing and extending on emerging positive relationships with others.
- Take notice and appreciate the work and ideas of others.
- Be active in participating in reciprocal relationships that build trust and allow play to happen.
- Learn social and self-regulation skills in waiting their turn and responding positively to others.
- Give their own ideas and share their own learning, and offer encouragement and feedback to the ideas and learnings of others.

Parents and carers can:

- Connect through informal networks, enhancing self-worth and a sense of belonging.

- Be active as adults in the group to encourage inclusive practices that allow everyone to celebrate and reflect.
- Take notice of the play and learning that has occurred for themselves, their child and others.
- Learn about what their child knows and can do, and the experiences they might benefit from at home.
- Give own thoughts and ideas and encourage and affirm the thoughts and ideas of others.

Elders can:

- Connect with the group and individuals within the group for a sense of enhanced self worth, purpose and belonging.
- Be active in participating, observing and being in the group.
- Take notice of their own place in the group and the ways their knowledge, skills and ideas are valued and welcomed.
- Learn and gain insights from children's knowledge, skills and unique perspectives.
- Give own thoughts and ideas and encourage and affirm the thoughts and ideas of others.



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