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M2 – YOUTH WORK, INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH AND YOUNG CAREGIVERS' SUPPORT

Introduction

In today's society, intergenerational dynamics take place within a framework that is very different from previous paradigms. This shift is characterised by three key factors (Dozza, 2009):

- a redefined demographic landscape;
- the structuring of personal, family and urban schedules;
- the separation of spaces inherent to different spheres of activity.

Numerous studies show that nowadays society is characterised by a complex intergenerational relationship. On the one hand, there is a crisis in relations between the different generations due to a lack of communication, greater alienation and a lack of mutual recognition and listening. On the other hand, there is a greater closeness between the generations than in the past, often fostered by a change in the way family relationships are experienced. For example, a new type of relationship is emerging between parents and sons, where parents are seen more as friends and major disagreements with sons are avoided. There is also a new dynamic between grandparents and grandchildren, influenced by the fact that more and more parents are working most of the time (Osservatorio nazionale per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, 2008). An effective approach to overcome these changes is to encourage opportunities for different generations to meet, permitting them to exchange experiences and understand what they have in common despite disparities.

Intergenerational learning emerges as a vital component deserving deeper exploration and integration into our educational systems, encompassing formal, non-formal, and informal settings. Particularly in youth contexts, this approach has the potential to foster heightened awareness and deliver significant advantages to young individuals, educators, and the broader community.





Intergenerational approach

What is it intergenerational approach?

Intergenerational approach could be defined as “a practice that aims to bring people from different generations together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect and contribute to building more cohesive communities.” (Hatton-Yeo & Telfer, 2010) In fact, intergenerational learning is characterised as a context in which people of different ages can learn together and from each other. Traditionally, this process occurs spontaneously within the family context where knowledge is passed on and shared from generation to generation. More recently, however, it also occurs in broader social groups outside the family context. Studies conducted by Kaplan (2002) and Vanderbeck & Worth (2015), suggest that the current model of intergenerational learning is one that **favours the socialisation and focuses on relationships**. In this paradigm, the interaction between young and old should enable both generations to feel part of the community, promoting mutual respect, interdependence and solidarity. In order to establish relationships based on solidarity, a change of perspective is needed that places shared well-being at the centre as an essential element of the quality of community life (Sen, 1993).

“Intergenerational practice can increase participation in positive activities, which is a key element in improving the prospects of all younger people, especially those from communities with a poor history of engagement and the 25% of younger people who do not currently engage in any positive activities outside learning.” (PSA 14/ Generations Together, 2009: 10).

Actively involving citizens as agents of change and promoting a territorial network of services is fundamental to effectively analysing the resources and fragilities of the various local realities (Deluigi, 2014b, 23).

The rhetoric of the intergenerational relationships

Today there is an intergenerational rhetoric reflecting public discourse on how intergenerational relations ought to be lived and assessed. Such a rhetoric is polarised between the idealization of the relationships between generations and through the word “solidarity” and the threat of the implications of this relationship through the word “conflict”. Metaphors are important elements of





this intergenerational rhetoric. In fact, in the common language the following metaphors are used (Lüscher et al., 2016):

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Development | → | Creation of a “New Man” |
| Cyclicity and Process | → | Chain of generations, seasons of life |
| Law | → | Intergenerational contract |
| Melioration future | → | Teacher as gardener, youth are our |
| Foreignness and severance | → | War of the generations |

What “generations” are?

The Greek word “genos” is based on the verb “genesthai”, which means “to come into existence” and describes stepping over the ever-changing threshold to life. Through the birth a new generation is formed, which **is different** from that of its parents. In ancient Rome the translation of the Greek term “generatio” means “genesis”, “creation”, “procreation”. Thereby, the creator creates something that **is similar** to himself/herself in form, though in case of humans the creation is different from its creator individually, and not as a species

So it is crucial that this “new” generation of something is distinct from the previously existing and at the same time shares common characteristics with the latter. The concept history can then—with some simplification—be separated into three phases:

- 1) In the ancient world the generations are viewed as means of transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, thereby laying down the foundation for a pedagogical understanding of intergenerational relations.
- 2) In modern age every “new” generation is meant as the departure into a new and open future. Generations are seen as a trigger of progress. The focus is on the arts and the sciences. The pre-emphasis of the concept goes hand-in-hand with a model of intergenerational relations focused on the teacher-student model of knowledge transfer.





3) In contemporary age, the generational concept is used as a diagnostic tool for characterizing a period of time. This expresses a changed perspective on the relationship between past, present and future. The future is seen as uncertain despite orientations rooted in past and tradition respectively, even if they are still effective.

Recognising oneself in a generation is important for self-identity. In fact, the human beings need to feel the affiliation to specific demographic cohorts, kinship relations, organizational membership or the experience of historical events. The focus is on thinking, feeling, wanting and acting, on life forms and life courses of individual as well as collective actors.

According to a sociological definition of time, being born in the same year represents a common ground for all people born in that year, because they share history, economic background, culture etc....

So “generations” can be defined as ‘joint experience communities’.

Nevertheless, each individual can belong to several generations at the same time. For instance, older siblings can assume parental tasks (care, upbringing) towards younger siblings. Young people can play the role of caregivers of parents and grandparents. The genealogically younger generation can occasionally assume the teacher role towards the middle and the older generations based on their higher competence in using communication technology, while they continue to be dependent on the older generations in terms of their livelihood or in company hierarchies. Parents studying for a degree may at certain times assume the role of a student while at other times assuming the parental role towards their children. This is what experts call “multigenerationality”

Thus, **intergenerational relationships can be defined as “social relations between members of two and more generations as well as within one and the same generation who are characterized by an awareness of generational membership with its resulting commonalities and differences (intergenerational and intragenerational relations)”** (Lüscher et al., 2016).

Why is the intergenerational approach important in youth work?

The term "intergenerational" is commonly viewed as academic and distant from the everyday language or experiences of many individuals, particularly those actively involved in intergenerational practice. Interestingly, some may not recognize that they are already engaged in





intergenerational work, despite feeling disconnected from the term. Notably, youth work inherently fosters intergenerational connections by building positive relationships among people of varying ages (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2009). In particular, for those who work with young people, acquiring training and expertise on intergenerational approaches is beneficial both for improving the relationship with the young people one works with and for designing specific programmes and initiatives aimed at fostering the connection between different generations.

Intergenerational programmes can be much more than 'feel-good activities' and can bring multiple benefits to individuals, groups, organisations and communities and can be a transversal response to various challenges such as (Ceccherelli, 2021):

- building safe and active communities;
- decreasing inequalities;
- reducing social isolation and loneliness;
- building quality relationships;
- improving health and psychological well-being;
- enhancing digital skills.

The importance of an intergenerational approach is also to promote the **overcoming of barriers, stereotypes and prejudices** (such as ageism, see below). For example, young people are often stereotyped because of the association between youthfulness and criminal behaviour. Conversely, older adults may perceive the gathering of young people as a potential threat, labelling them as vandals or troublemakers. Intergenerational projects serve as platforms where younger and older generations can actively challenge and change these negative perceptions, in order to foster meaningful human relationships and to contribute to the creation of more inclusive and communicative communities (Minello and Margiotta, 2011).

In this context, education plays a pivotal role in cultivating the desire to connect with others, forging shared paths, and nurturing a sense of community belonging. Youth work is significant within community development and is an important site for intergenerational interaction. Its primary aim is to enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of young people, while at the same time promoting social awareness and a sense of social solidarity. These are key themes of intergenerational practice. Intergenerational practice also has a role in various facets of youth work where the concept of ageing is relevant, particularly in decision-making processes with long-term implications. This approach is in line with the life cycle perspective, which sees ageing as a





continuous process from birth to death and should be integrated into all our decision-making and operational practices. By incorporating intergenerational practice, awareness of this aspect in working and everyday life is raised and a positive perception of ageing is actively promoted (National Youth Council of Ireland 2009).

In conclusion, promoting a supportive relationship between generations necessitates a shift in both individual and collective mindsets, which can be achieved through various means. Firstly, fostering respect and responsibility towards other generations involves encouraging interaction, life exchange, storytelling, and sharing resources. Furthermore, the expansion of life perspectives and the weakening of social bonds can intensify intergenerational conflicts, emphasizing the importance of recognizing that no one exists in isolation, and individual actions impact others. Genuine encounters and effective communication are crucial, transcending the mere provision of meeting spaces. For each individual and each generation to actively participate in this dialogue, it is crucial to value personal characteristics, regardless of age, and to avoid rigidly assigning roles and functions to the individuals or generations involved (Deluigi, 2014a).

LET'S DISCUSS:

What are the main intergenerational challenges you encounter in your contexts? And the possible strategies to address them?

Use tools like jamboard.google.com to collect participants' considerations

Ageism

What is ageism?

Age doesn't define you - Global Campaign to Combat Ageism - #AWorld4AllAges
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vIrL7fiNgw>

“Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age” (WHO, 2021)

A key aspect of intergenerational work is its focus on challenging stereotypes based on age. In particular ageism refers to the stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against individuals because of their age. This concept encompasses different facets: stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory actions or attitudes, each of which can be categorised as cognitive, affective or behavioural (Kang & Kim, 2022). According to findings from the Global Report on Ageism (WHO,





2021), a survey spanning 57 countries conducted between 2010 and 2014 revealed that over half of the global population holds ageist attitudes towards older individuals. Moreover, in Europe, younger individuals report encountering more ageism compared to other age groups.

Age stereotypes are fixed beliefs that generalise the characteristics, attributes and behaviours of a particular age group. These stereotypes often lead to assumptions about an individual's physical and mental abilities, social skills, and other characteristics based solely on their age. For example, young people may be perceived as only energetic but not attentive, while older people may be perceived as only wise but frail. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people view their own age group more favourably than other age groups - this is a phenomenon referred to as group favouritism or group bias. Consequently, the young and the old often have a more positive view of their age groups respectively.

Age prejudices are particularly pervasive in society and is often institutionalised and socially vocalised, yet often overlooked in different social contexts (Kang & Kim, 2022). Prejudice implies a pre-constructed negative attitude towards individuals or groups without any previous interaction. It includes both an emotional dimension, such as feelings of nervousness, anger, contempt, pity or dislike, and a cognitive dimension, which includes assumptions and beliefs about these groups, often rooted in stereotypes.

Discriminatory acts are characterised by behaviour that treats individuals in a biased and non-constructive manner. Age discrimination includes behaviours, practices and policies that target individuals on the basis of their age (Kang & Kim, 2022). For example, in the employment context young people may suffer age discrimination such as being belittled, rejected for a job opportunity or paid inadequate wages, simply because of their young age. Conversely, older people may be rejected or turned down because potential employers consider them too old.

It is important to be aware that ageism affects everyone. From an early age people assume stereotypes about their age and typical of their own context and culture. Stereotypes are internalised and used to guide one's feelings and behaviour towards people of different ages. One also draws on these stereotypes to better perceive and understand oneself, and this could also lead to self-directed ageism and this could happen at any age. Ageism intersects with and exacerbates other forms of disadvantage, including those related to gender, race and disability (WHO, 2021).

LET'S DISCUSS:





What stereotypes do the young people you work with feel associated with them?

What stereotypes do you feel are associated with your role as a youth worker?

Use tools like jamboard.google.com to collect participants' considerations

Teens experience ageism too | Amelia Conway | TEDxManhattanBeach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ8GCmG-Zqw>

In addition, ageism can manifest itself in two main ways: **implicitly**, through unconscious thoughts, feelings and behaviours, or **explicitly**, through deliberate actions or verbal expressions triggered by conscious awareness (Iversen et al., 2009). Furthermore, ageism is not limited to being directed at others, but can also be self-directed and exposure to ageism over time can lead to internalisation of ageist attitudes and stereotypes (Kang & Kim, 2022).

Also in the youth field, it is essential that youth workers develop a more awareness of ageist attitudes that might emerge, both towards the young people with whom they interact and towards themselves.

While older people often experience a sense of being of little importance, younger people often experience a sense of being voiceless, ignored and dismissed.





Quiz Questions

What does the term “generations” mean?

- Just being born in the same year
- Believing in the same religion
- Sharing the same values
- Being part of a ‘joint experience community’

How Intergenerational relationships can be defined?

- Social relations between members of two and more generations only
- Social relations between members of more than two generations
- Social relations between members of two and more generations as well as within one
- Social relation between adults born in the same year

What does intergenerational learning entail?

- Intergenerational learning occurs when individuals from various age groups can learn together and from each other
- Intergenerational learning involves younger people learning from older individuals
- Intergenerational learning encompasses older individuals teaching younger people about the past
- Intergenerational learning involves older people and younger people having no direct interaction

Why is intergenerational learning crucial?

- It fosters intergenerational relationships, nurturing social capital, and enhancing social cohesion within aging communities
- It reduces costs by engaging older individuals as volunteers to educate younger generations
- It only facilitates learning for young people
- Allows creating separate spaces between young and old, so that each generation can grow individually

What can participants achieve and share through intergenerational learning?

- Opportunities to build meaningful relationships over time
- Knowledge and wisdom gained through the exchange of life experiences





- Intergenerational programmes can effectively address important problems and issues from a community perspective
- all previous answers

What is the definition of ageism?

- Preferring people of a certain age group over others.
- Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination based on age
- Discriminatory acts against people regardless of their age
- Believing that age does not affect a person's abilities or characteristics.

What is not important in addressing ageist attitudes in the youth sector?

- To promote intergenerational harmony
- To ensure equal opportunities for all age groups
- To develop awareness of ageist attitudes among both young people and youth workers themselves
- To ignore the importance of intergenerational education and inclusion





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THE QUITES

REPORT (Arial 32)

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Subtitle (Arial 26)

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Intergenerational learning, mentoring and reverse mentoring

Introduction

In a world where more and more young people are taking on caring roles and responsibilities, mentoring emerges as a valuable tool to provide support and guidance to those who face unique caring challenges. This module aims to explore the potential of mentoring in the context of young carers, providing youth workers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively facilitate these valuable supportive relationships.

In the specific context of young carers, mentoring can provide an opportunity for exchange and a point of reference for those facing the unique challenges of balancing caring commitments with other aspects of their lives. Through mentoring, young carers can receive emotional support, practical strategies and motivation to pursue their own well-being and success in their caring role.

Mentoring

"Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to benefit from this exchange, to enrich their professional journey".

Suzanne Faure

Mentoring involves primarily listening with empathy, sharing experience (usually mutually), professional friendship, developing insight through reflection, being a sounding board, encouraging"

David Clutterbuck

There's no single, universally accepted definition of mentoring. The concept and role of a mentor has been around for as long as people have gathered together. Throughout history, experienced individuals have played a crucial role in guiding and sharing their wisdom with others during significant life transitions such as entering adulthood, marriage, parenthood or assuming community leadership roles. In addition, there has always been a need to preserve traditions,





values and a sense of lineage by passing them down through generations. In fact, mentoring also aims at a person's long-term development potential, focusing on their growth in all facets of their person. This aspect makes it an extremely effective complement to other forms of learning and development, often enhancing their effectiveness.

Regardless the field of application, mentors have to carry on a set of **activities** described in the figure below:

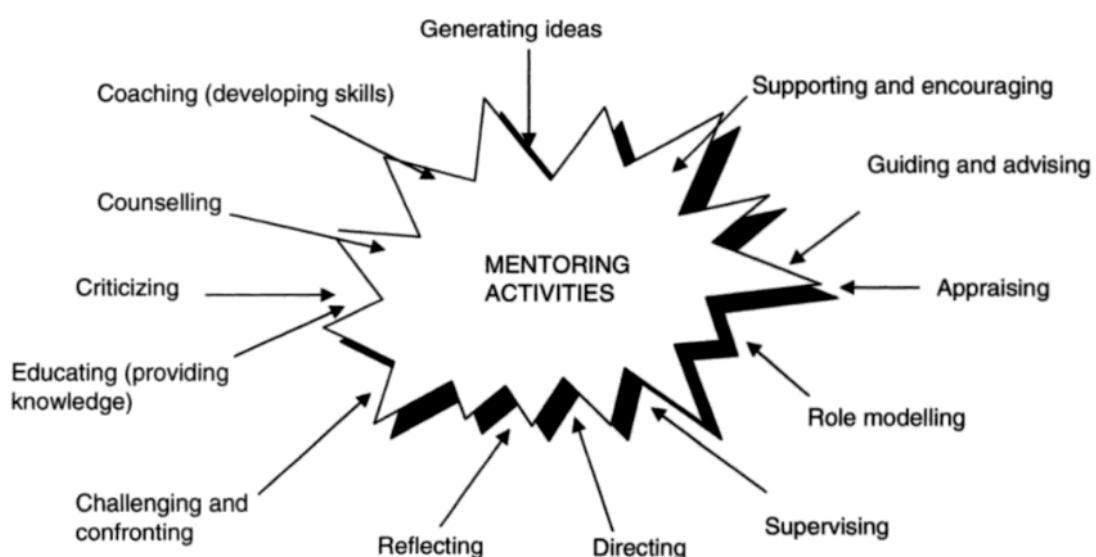


Figure 1: Mentors' activities

Source: Clutterbuck, D., & Lane, G. (Eds.). (2004). *The situational mentor: An international review of competences and capabilities in mentoring*.

Mentors should also have the following **competences**:

- Self-awareness (understanding self)
- Behavioural awareness (understanding others)
- Sense of proportion/good humor
- Communication competence
- Conceptual modelling
- Commitment to the continuous learning
- Strong interest in developing others
- Building and maintaining relationships
- Goal clarity





At the basis of mentoring there is the personal relationship between a mentor, who is a more experienced person, and a mentee, who can be defined as a knowledge-seeking person. Key components of an effective mentoring relationship, among others, seem to be open communication, shared goals and challenges, mutual respect, trust between mentor and mentee. Within this relationship, the mentor does not merely transfer knowledge, but he/she also provides emotional support to the mentee in a continuous interaction driven by learners' needs and goals. Intergenerational mentoring is associated with multiple positive outcomes both for mentees and mentors. On the one hand indeed, the youngsters can benefit from mentoring by improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, getting inspiration from mentors, increasing motivation to be successful in life and work (Santini et al., 2020).

How can mentoring be applied to caregiving?

Young carers face a range of physical, emotional and financial challenges and pressures. It is vital to create an environment that is conducive to learning and support for them, providing opportunities for sharing and ongoing dialogue to ensure ongoing support.

Mentoring programmes can promote an open dialogue that encourages reflection and continuous progress. The main objectives of mentoring in caring include reducing emotional distress, loneliness and social isolation, and stimulating motivation to care.

Types of mentoring in caregiving

Although methods and purposes are similar, two different types of mentoring can be distinguished:

- **Befriending:** this can be described as a relationship between two or more individuals that is initiated, supported and monitored by a third entity. In this case, the caregiver is identified as the recipient of support, also called a mentee. The relationship is based on ideal principles that include absence of judgement or evaluation, reciprocity, purposefulness and a commitment to time on the part of both parties (Dean and Goodlad, 1998). The third entity has the role of coordinating the befriending process, it is much more than organising the sharing of time between two people, it is about initiating and sustaining relationships involving different people, personalities, expectations and personal situations.
- **Peer support:** in this type of mentoring relationship, the mentor is a person who has encountered similar significant challenges as the carer (Sherman, DeVinney, & Sperling, 2004). The benefit is the sharing of similar experiences and the establishment of a relationship of trust and confidence.

The main distinction between the two types is that, in Befriending mentoring, mentors may not necessarily have had similar experiences to the supported person.





Different research indicates that support is most effective when offered by a 'similar other', i.e. someone who has successfully overcome a similar situation and can use their experience to establish an empathic connection, meet the mentee's emotional and practical needs and instil hope for the future (Smith and Greenwood, 2013; Greenwood et al., 1995). For this reason, it is often preferred to select **former carers as mentors**, as they and volunteers often point out that a crucial element of their relationship was the shared experience of caring for a person with dementia. This allows for an authentic understanding of carers' situations (Greenwood et al., 2013; Sabir, Pillemer, Suitor, & Patterson, 2003).

Another type of mentoring: Reverse mentoring

The concept of reverse mentoring involves the reversal of traditional mentoring roles, where a less experienced person takes on the role of mentor for a more experienced person who becomes the mentee. This shift challenges conventional notions of hierarchical relationships and emphasises reciprocity. The concept of reverse-mentoring is another innovative way to encourage learning for "both sides", which fosters mutual learning. This approach not only promotes learning for all, but also holds great promise for improving intergenerational relationships by fostering understanding and respect. For instance, through reverse mentoring, the skills of the younger generation, who are often digital natives, can be harnessed to bring their perspective on the latest technological knowledge (Sabine Zauchner-Studnicka, 2017).

It can be beneficial to recognize the valuable contributions that younger or less experienced carers can bring to their roles as mentors.

These contributions may include (Bates, 2022):

- Younger individuals possess a natural affinity for **technology and social media**, which can be an essential skill that older individuals may lack. Those who have attended university are often up to date with research findings and innovative practices, which can be valuable to older people.
- Younger individuals may embrace a **postmodern worldview**, while older people may feel less comfortable in this cultural environment. Age-based stereotypes can hinder engagement in cross-generational mentoring, an effective reverse mentoring can help break down these stereotypes.
- Access to social networks and connections, particularly within specific communities that may be less accessible to individuals in traditional power roles.
- Younger individuals often exhibit **openness to change**, creative solutions, and innovation, fostering an attitude of "why not?"





- The ability to establish effective communication and relationship with others is a valuable skill. These programs should consider hobbies when matching individuals, increasing the likelihood of building rapport and sustaining relationships beyond the formal mentorship program, into alumni groups, informal mentoring, or even friendships.

Assigning to young caregivers the role of mentors of adult carers could bring some benefits for both.

In light of young people's greater capacity for thinking out of the box, creative skills and great empathy and tenderness, they can often mediate with the lightness and spontaneity typical of young people, the tensions that may arise in the main carer-care recipient dyad. In fact, adolescents and youngsters are often secondary or auxiliary carers of older family members, i.e. grandparents. In the relationship between non-adjacent generations, i.e. grandchildren-grandparents, young carers could become the mentors of the main carers i.e. their mother or father for helping the latter approach the older care recipient with tenderness and joy.

Being mentors may increase young carers' self-esteem and self-confidence and so contribute to a healthy personality development.

Obviously, young carers as well as any other person, need to be trained to be a mentor for developing the competences mentioned above.

The benefits of mentoring for caregivers

The literature shows that there are numerous benefits that carers derive from the mentoring relationship. In particular, these benefits have emerged in carers:

- recognise that they are not alone and their own experience is more easily "normalised"
- develop a social network, reducing isolation
- receive emotional support, they have a confrontation about the difficulties they are experiencing
- build resilience and confidence, having the possibility to see their problems from a new perspective
- enjoy being able to talk to a person outside the family unit
- develop skills and transfer of knowledge, receiving useful advice and information
- perceive the burden of care as reduced

The benefits of mentoring for mentors

The mentor, despite taking on an emotionally involving role of responsibility, can also benefit from the mentoring relationship. In various studies, volunteers reported having:

- Experienced mutual emotional benefit, i.e. helped themselves through assisting the other
- Developed valuable skills and felt they were putting their experience to use for a worthy cause





- Perceived having a significant impact
- Built authentic bonds with carers

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Divide participants into small groups.

Provide each group with a set of discussion questions:

- What are some of the challenges faced by young carers?
- How can mentoring programmes be tailored to effectively support young carers?
- What qualities do you think are essential for mentors working with carers?

How to foster the co-creation of the relationship

Engaging in mentoring relationships has immense value for both mentors and mentees, providing a platform for mutual growth and development.

With commitment and effort from both parties, mentorship becomes an enriching journey. Here are strategies to optimise your mentorship experience (Faster Capital, 2024a):

- Foster transparent and open communication.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of any relationship, especially a mentorship. Creating an environment where both parties feel comfortable sharing thoughts, feelings and ideas is critical to maximising the potential of the partnership.

- Respect each other's time commitments.

Mutual respect for time commitments is essential. Ensuring that neither the mentor nor the mentee feels that their time is being wasted is essential to maintaining a productive and harmonious relationship.

- Set achievable expectations.

Realistic expectations are key to a successful mentoring relationship. Setting overly ambitious goals can lead to frustration and disillusionment. It's important to have a clear understanding of what can be achieved together.

- Practice patience.

Patience is essential as both parties navigate towards their goals. Anticipate setbacks and challenges along the way, but persevere to overcome them together.

- Embrace feedback.

Feedback serves as a catalyst for growth in mentoring. A willingness to give and receive feedback fosters continuous improvement. Resistance to feedback hinders progress and undermines the relationship.





- Celebrate successes together.

Acknowledging and celebrating successes strengthens the bond between mentor and mentee.

Such moments of triumph serve as motivation to continue pursuing common goals.

By following these guidelines, you can optimise your mentoring experience and maximise its many benefits.

A “good” matching

“In practice, mentors provide a spectrum of learning and supporting behaviours, from challenging and being a critical friend to being a role model, from helping to build networks and build personal resourcefulness to simply being there to listen, from helping people work out what they want to achieve, and why, to planning how they will bring that change about.” David Clutterbuck (2004)

Successful mentoring programmes understand that the effectiveness of the mentoring dynamic depends heavily on the match between carer and mentor. When a carer is matched with a mentor who is a good fit, it can greatly enhance the carer's journey, fostering skill enhancement, personal development and overall satisfaction (FasterCapital, 2024b). When matching carers and mentors, it's important to consider their caring roles and responsibilities. While skills are important, emotional resonance is equally important. A mentor who understands and empathises with the emotional challenges of caring can provide invaluable support, encouragement and coping mechanisms. It's also important to assess the availability and commitment of the mentor. A mentor who can commit time and actively participate in the carer's journey is essential.

There are several qualities that carers identify as desirable in a 'good mentor'. These characteristics mainly include (Greenwood and Habibi, 2013):

- patience
- understanding
- empathy
- warmth
- enthusiasm
- being helpful
- being considerate
- be open-minded
- be a good listener and a person with whom it is easy to exchange views
- be motivated
- be supportive in making decisions





Mentoring Communication Skills

- **Trust and respect:** Respond promptly. Be on time and be present, eliminate distractions. Share vulnerabilities. Honour commitments. Acknowledge contributions. Maintain confidentiality.
- **Questioning:** Use open questions to explore and reflect... – *What happened?* – *What was that like?* Use closed questions to test understanding... – *Is that right?* – *Have I understood that?* Be comfortable with silence after you ask a question.
- **Listening:** Listen to understand: – be patient, don't think about what to say next while the person is speaking – be neutral, no judgement. Listen with all your senses: – look at body language – respond with body language – eye-contact, posture and smiling.
- **Feedback:** If you are the sender use acknowledgement (strengths + impact) to build confidence. Use feedback (facts + impact) to explore what to do differently. If you are the receiver, accept acknowledgement and be open to feedback and reflecting on it.

Adapted from International Association of Facilitators – IAF Mentoring programme. A guide for mentees and mentors.





Quiz Questions

1. How can mentoring be beneficial in caregiving according to the provided text?
 - a) By solely focusing on financial support for carers
 - b) By promoting emotional distress and social isolation
 - c) By fostering an environment of learning and support
 - d) By imposing strict regulations on caregiving practices
2. What are some valuable contributions that younger or less experienced people can bring to their role as mentors in reverse mentoring?
 - a) Possession of a postmodern worldview and comfort in cultural environments.
 - b) Extensive experience of traditional power roles and hierarchies
 - c) Resistance to change and innovation
 - d) Limited access to social networks and relationships
3. What are some of the benefits that carers can gain from participating in a mentoring relationship?
 - a) Feeling isolated and alone in their caring experience.
 - b) Receiving emotional support and confronting difficulties
 - c) Developing valuable skills and feeling that they are contributing to a worthy cause
 - d) Perceiving an increase in the burden of caring
4. Which of the following strategies is essential for promoting transparent and open communication in a mentoring relationship?
 - a) Setting overly ambitious goals
 - b) Respecting each other's time commitments
 - c) Avoiding feedback from the mentor
 - d) Practicing impatience
5. According to the text provided, what is an important consideration when matching mentors and mentees?
 - a) Focus on the skills and expertise of the mentor and mentee
 - b) Enhancing the emotional resonance between the carer and the mentor
 - c) Evaluate the mentor's availability and commitment
 - d) All answers





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THE NEXUS REPORT (Arial 32) (Bold)

Subtitle (Arial 26)

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Methods and techniques to use in intergenerational interventions

Introduction

Understanding the interconnectedness of life stages underscores the importance of considering how decisions made earlier in life affect our well-being as we age. Intergenerational interventions aim to promote the benefits of a life-cycle approach, to raise awareness about ageing and to foster mutual understanding and solidarity between generations. In this context, young caregivers play a crucial role in providing care and support to the elderly and other different generations. Their involvement is vital to the overall well-being of the elderly, providing emotional support, physical help and fostering intergenerational bonds. It is fundamental to recognise and support these young caregivers in order to safeguard the well-being of both the care recipient and the young person.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Principles of intergenerational practice

The guiding **principles of intergenerational practice** are (World Health Organisation, 2023):

- **PARTICIPATORY:** Both older and younger people should be actively involved and given opportunities to participate in all aspects of intergenerational practice.
- **INCLUSIVE:** Recognise diversity within each age group and respect individual differences in abilities, needs and identities, including age, religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and physical and mental abilities.
- **UNIVERSAL:** Be aware of cultural differences and adapt practices to different contexts as necessary.
- **FRIENDSHIP:** Promote mechanisms that support the development of friendships between people of different ages, as friendship is essential for positive intergenerational interaction.
- **DO NO HARM:** Prioritise the wellbeing of participants and strive to minimise harm to any age group involved.





- EQUALITY: Ensure equal consideration for all members of society, even if this requires unequal distribution of resources to benefit the most vulnerable or marginalised.
- HUMAN RIGHTS: Uphold the rights of all individuals regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical and mental ability.
- CROSS-OR INTERDISCIPLINARY: Integrate diverse knowledge and experience from different disciplines to enrich intergenerational practices.
- MUTUAL, RECIPROCAL BENEFIT: Ensure that all participants benefit from intergenerational interactions.
- ASSET-BASED: Build on strengths within the community to promote successful outcomes.
- EVIDENCE-BASED: Base practices on the best available evidence while tailoring activities to specific contexts.





LEVELS OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACT

Intergenerational practice can take different forms, ranging from simple, short-term activities to large-scale projects integrated into community programmes. Typically, intergenerational contact develops gradually, moving through different stages over time. The '7 levels of intergenerational contact' provide a framework for promoting and tracking the level of interaction between the generations involved, from the initial stages of getting to know each other to the establishment of intergenerational community settings (Kaplan, 2002).

1. LEARNING ABOUT THE OTHER AGE GROUP

Encourage exploration of different lifestyles of people of different ages without direct contact. Discuss age in relation to other generations, explore different aspects of their lives and articulate exchanges of ideas and perceptions. For example, initiatives can be organised where young people can learn about different stages of life and the lives of older people, while older adults can watch a TV programme about youth and current social trends.

2. SEEING THE OTHER AGE GROUP BUT AT A DISTANCE

Young and old learn from each other and create positive bonds without meeting directly in person. For example, they can exchange stories through written correspondence, messages, phone or video calls, small gifts, sharing photos and music or through games and activities.

3. MEETING EACH OTHER

Younger and older people meet for the first time outside structured intergenerational programmes. Examples: include young people making a one-off visit to an older person, or young and old people attending an external event where they have the opportunity to interact.

4. ANNUAL OR PERIODIC ACTIVITIES

Regular meetings planned as part of existing local or community events or organised commemorations, such as International Day of Older Persons or Family Caregiver Day.

5. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Regular meetings and collaborative activities foster intergenerational relations through dialogue, sharing and learning between age groups. For example, young and old can exchange skills and life experiences such as repairing bicycles, gardening and landscaping, and learn new skills such as using mobile phones or computers.

6. ON-GOING INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Include intergenerational programmes in the general activities of the target groups involved. Examples: A volunteer programme in the youth context in which older volunteers are trained and involved in supporting and exchanging tasks and activities with younger ones.





7. ON-GOING, NATURAL INTERGENERATIONAL SHARING, SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION

The values of intergenerational interaction are introduced into the planning, development and functioning of communities. The many opportunities for meaningful intergenerational engagement are embedded into social norms and traditions. Examples: A community that has become an intergenerational setting, where older and younger people live together and help one another; a community park designed to attract and bring together people of all ages and to accommodate various (passive and active) recreational interests.

Developing an intergenerational programme

It is essential to carefully outline the practical steps necessary to ensure the success of an intergenerational learning programme. These include thorough planning, clear communication, stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, curriculum development, activity design, implementation strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and continuous improvement initiatives. By systematically addressing each of these components, organisations can create an environment conducive to meaningful intergenerational exchange and holistic learning experiences for all involved.

Below are some guiding questions to consider when designing an intergenerational programme (Clyde & Kerr, 2020):

- 4) What are the objectives and expected outcomes of your initiative? What specific areas are prioritized?
- 5) Which age brackets, genders, and interests do you intend to cater to? Additionally, are there any relevant past occupations or hobbies among the participants?
- 6) What kinds of activities do you anticipate being effective for the designated priority areas? Understanding participant demographics can offer insights into their preferences for participation.
- 7) Where will the program or activities be hosted?
- 8) What are the primary benefits sought from the initiative? Consider impacts beyond the participants themselves, including staff, parents, the organisation, and the broader community.
- 9) What potential obstacles might the program encounter?
- 10) How do you plan to assess, quantify, and document the genuine impact of the intergenerational learning and relationships fostered? It's crucial to devise an evaluation strategy early in the project's planning stages.





11) In what ways will you commemorate achievements and the formation of new relationships?

Additionally, how will you sustain these connections over time?

The **timing for making connections and understanding** the target groups involved will vary depending on the level of interaction between participants. This may vary depending on the age and characteristics of the group.

When developing a plan for the intergenerational programme, it is important to **involve those who can represent the different specific generations**. Ideally, potential participants should also be involved in the planning process. In addition, consideration should be given to seeking specialist help, such as a dementia specialist (if the programme involves people with dementia), to provide additional support or training. Develop strategies for celebrating success, fostering new relationships and maintaining existing ones.

Evaluating the progress of your intergenerational programme is essential for reflection, identifying barriers and recognising successes. This evaluation process guides your team in developing sustainability and future initiatives. The outcome of the activity or project, often referred to as social impact, is important. The impact of your programme on participants, whether in terms of learning, relationship building or attitude change, depending on your objectives (Clyde & Kerr, 2021).





Intergenerational activities

Various strategies favour the success of intergenerational projects, in particular case studies, problem-solving, simulations, cooperative learning and reciprocal teaching are effective. These approaches make it possible to apply learned concepts to shared practical activities, thus facilitating learning through experience. Furthermore, an environment that facilitates intergenerational learning must allow different generations to learn through action and the sharing of practical knowledge and skills (Sanchez, 2008).

Intergenerational activities are the foundation of the contact between different generations within a project and represent the interactions involving both younger and older generations to achieve a common goal together. Through these shared experiences and regular contact, prejudices and stereotypes are identified, challenged and overcome, thus contributing to better social cohesion (Sanchez, 2008). Our source of inspiration was the *Connecting generations* guide (WHO, 2023) which listed 40 activities suitable for any intergenerational project, adaptable to a variety of contexts. These activities can be conducted anywhere and can take both physical and digital form. Examples of places where these activities have been successful include farms, hospitals, schools, universities, homes for the elderly, gardens, art and cultural spaces, community centres, parks, youth centres and health centres. Below are some of the activities proposed in the *Connecting generations guide* (WHO, 2023).

Group activity:

Exploring examples of intergenerational activities

- Divide participants into small groups.
- Give each group a copy of the Annex I – activities from *Connecting generations guide* (WHO, 2023).
- Ask each group to select one or two activities from the guide that they find particularly interesting or innovative.
- Instruct the groups to read about their chosen activities and discuss the potential impact they could have on promoting this activity in their contexts.
- Ask each group to present their chosen activities to the rest of the participants, highlighting the main features and benefits.
- After each presentation, facilitate a short discussion to gather insights and reflections from the whole group.





Quiz Questions

- 1. Which of the following is NOT one of the guiding principles of intergenerational practice according to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023?**
 - a) Participatory
 - b) Inclusive
 - c) Creativity
 - d) Friendship

- 2. At which stage of intergenerational contact do younger and older individuals learn about each other's lifestyles without direct contact?**
 - a) Seeing the Other Age Group But at a Distance
 - b) Meeting Each Other
 - c) Learning About the Other Age Group
 - d) Annual or Periodic Activities

- 3. Why is it important to involve potential participants in the planning process of an intergenerational programme?**
 - To decrease programme costs
 - To share the work to be carried out
 - To ensure program relevance and inclusivity
 - To better disseminate the programme

- 4. What is an important aspect to consider when identifying target groups for an intergenerational program?**
 - a) Mutual knowledge between the groups involved
 - b) Activity preferences
 - c) The educational background of the participants
 - d) All the answers

- 5. Which of the following strategies is NOT mentioned as effective for intergenerational projects according to the provided text?**
 - a) Case studies





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- b) Problem-solving
- c) Digital learning
- d) Simulations





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Annex I

All the activities presented have been collected and published in the *Connecting Generation – Planning and implementing interventions for intergenerational contacts* (WHO, 2023).

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AGES:

> 18 YEARS

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

This activity is suitable for younger and older people living in rural settings. It brings them together as a community of knowledge to facilitate environmental learning and knowledge-sharing. Older members share the knowledge and skills of a rural way of life, while younger members may share experiences of rural changes. The activity encourages participants to examine the effects of change in their community and brings younger and older adults together on equal, reciprocal terms to develop local interventions for community issues and build community capacity.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

Listen, speak about the community, share stories of the past and the present and come to decisions on the future.

LOCATION:

SETTINGS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST: Community.

RELEVANT FOR: Individuals, volunteers and people working in health, social care, education, child care and community development.

RESOURCES: paper, pens, images from past and present, camera, chairs.

INDOORS OUTDOORS VIRTUALLY 68 NOTES FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS: This is a good activity for participants in different groups to meet, share information on important topics and seek answers to local issues.

ADAPTATIONS: deforestation, drought, unemployment, poverty, social housing, rural skills.

OUTCOMES: physical, improve social relationships, increase well-being, psycho-social improvements, reduce ageism.

EVALUATION METHOD TO BE USED: Participant feedback in person, surveys, observation.

Adapted from McQuaid K, Vanderbeck R, Plastow J, Valentine G, Liu C, Chen L et al.

Intergenerational communitybased research and creative practice: Promoting environmental sustainability in Jinja, Uganda. *J Intergenerational Relat.* 2017;15(4):389–410. doi: 10.1080/15350770.2017.1368357





INTERGENERATIONAL PATCHWORK QUILT

AGES: ≥ 2 YEARS DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

This activity is suitable for people of all ages. Mixed-aged pairs sit around a table, each with a piece of fabric. Using markers, scissors, glue, feathers, buttons, glitter and other materials provided by the participants, they each decorate their piece of fabric. These are collected at the end of the session, and the activity leader or an older volunteer sews, glues or staples them together to make a small quilt. This can be hung in a place chosen by the participants.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

Listen to instructions, use pens or markers, glue small objects onto fabric.

LOCATION: SETTINGS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST:

Care homes, schools, community spaces.

RELEVANT FOR:

Individuals, volunteers and people working in health, social care, education, child care and community development.

RESOURCES:

- a) one piece of fabric per participant
- b) materials to decorate and personalize them, such as markers, pens, paints, glue, glitter, buttons or sewing materials.

INDOORS OUTDOORS VIRTUALLY

NOTE FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS:

Use age-appropriate materials, considering the abilities of older and younger participants when selecting them, e.g. glue spreaders, types of glue, paint, markers.

ADAPTATIONS:

- If participants wish, they can take their piece of fabric home and sew patterns or embroider it.
- This activity can be conducted remotely with people working online or with a window between them, as long as they can watch each other and gesture to one another if necessary.

OUTCOMES:

- a) physical improvements
- b) improve social relationships
- c) increase well-being
- d) psycho-social improvements
- e) reduce ageism.

EVALUATION METHOD TO BE USED:

Participant feedback in person, surveys, observation





INTERGENERATIONAL DRAMA

AGES: ≥ 13 YEARS

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

This activity is a creative, interactive way to explore and express ageism and ageist attitudes in everyday life. The activity provokes participants to think about their experiences of ageism and to prepare short plays based on those experiences with simple props. It enables participants to know each other, promotes conversation and, usually, laughter. It can be conducted with single-age groups to prepare them to meet other age groups or as an intergenerational activity. Participants are organized into groups of four or five people, with an equal mix of ages groups if conducted as an intergenerational activity. Each group is given 15 minutes to discuss their experiences of ageism and then choosing one for the group to act out. The following questions could be posed to the groups to prompt discussion:

- Have you ever been unfairly treated on the basis of your age?
- Have you ever witnessed a situation in which someone else was unfairly treated on the basis of their age that made you feel uncomfortable?
- Have you ever been treated better or worse than someone else on the basis of age?

Once the groups have discussed their experiences and chosen one to act out, place some simple props in the middle of the room for participants to use and something paper and pens. Give the groups 15 minutes to compose their scene and to prepare for acting out. Check in on progress in each group. Invite each group to present their scene to the participants, encouraging appreciation for each group. After all the groups have presented their scenes, prompt discussion of the scenes with questions such as:

- Does ageism affect older and younger people equally?
- Do age groups in between also experience ageism?
- Are children treated better than adolescents?
- What can be done to reduce ageism?

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO: Listen, speak and move.

LOCATION: INDOORS OUTDOORS 100 SETTINGS

IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST: Schools, community places, youth groups.

RELEVANT FOR: Individuals, volunteers and people working in health, social care, education, child care and community development.

RESOURCES:

- appropriate space and seating
- space for acting scenes
- simple props, such as clothing
- mobility aids
- paper and pens.

NOTES FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS:

- Encourage everyone to talk about their experiences and to be creative.
- This activity should stimulate conversations and having fun and should involve noise and laughter!

ADAPTATIONS:

- The activity can be conducted for a single-age group to prepare them for intergenerational activities or as an intergenerational activity.





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- The conversation prompts should be adapted to the group and the context of the activity.

OUTCOMES:

- improve social relationships
- increase well-being
- increase mobility
- psycho-social improvements
- reduce ageism
- preparation for meeting other age groups.

EVALUATION METHOD TO BE USED: Participant feedback in person, surveys, observation





WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DATE OF MY BIRTH?

AGES: ≥ 7 Y E A R S

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

Older and younger people sit together at a table and share a digital device on which they look up their date of birth to find out what was happening in the world at that time. People can work together in pairs or small groups, depending upon how many digital devices are available. They consult the website www.dayofbirth.co.uk and take turns in entering their dates of birth. This activity provides opportunities for people to find out about each other, to compare events on a specific day, to share interesting facts with the group and to find out who is the oldest and the youngest in the group. To encourage conversation, prompts that could be used are:

- How old are you in “dog years”?
- How many days old are you?
- Who was born in the Chinese year of the rat?
- Who was born in a leap year?
- Who was born on a Sunday?
- What is your birth flower?
- What is your birth stone?
- Who was the Prime Minister of the country at the time?

This activity provides an opportunity for people to know each other a little and learn about similarities and differences; for example, two people born in different years might both have been born in the same Chinese year.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

Listen, follow instructions and work in intergenerational pairs or small groups; use a digital device to obtain information on what happened on the date of their birth, perhaps with help from each other or volunteers.

LOCATION: INDOORS VIRTUALLY

SETTINGS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST:

Schools, care homes, sheltered housing schemes, community centres, youth groups.

RELEVANT FOR:

Teachers, care-home activity coordinators, sheltered housing scheme managers and staff, youth group leaders.

RESOURCES:

- tables
- fixed computers, laptops, tablet, mouse, stylus pen for precision touching on screen.

NOTES FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS:

- Explain how to log on, use search engine and enter participants' dates of birth.
- Participants work together in intergenerational pairs or small groups.





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- Participants may wish to search for more information; internet activity and websites should, however, be supervised at all times.

ADAPTATION:

When conducted virtually, activity leaders should encourage conversation, questions and descriptions of what happened on their date of birth on a large screen.

OUTCOMES:

- reduce ageism
- improve social relationships
- increase well-being
- psycho-social improvements
- increase skills





COLLAGE

AGES: \geq 5 YEARS

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: Collage provides an opportunity for people of all ages to work creatively together on a project, regardless of their age and artistic or physical skills. A collage consists simply of arranging pictures or materials as desired. The activity generates relaxed conversation and builds connections among participants. It can be conducted in mixed-age pairs or in larger groups. Organize the group into pairs seated at a table or on a flat surface. Explain that they will work together to produce a collage from the resources, materials and glue provided. They can create whatever they like.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO: Communicate with their partners about what they wish to create, tear or use scissors (perhaps with support from partners) and use glue to stick the materials to cardboard or paper.

LOCATION: SETTINGS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST: Care homes, schools, community spaces, hospitals.

RELEVANT FOR: Individuals, volunteers and people working in health, social care, education and community development.

RESOURCES: tables with a protective cover if required, raised seats or cushions for younger children, aprons, water and towels to wash and dry hands

INDOORS OUTDOORS materials such as old magazines, newspapers, cards, coloured tissue, crepe paper, ribbon, lace, photographs, crayons, thick paper, posterboard or cardboard, suitable scissors, glue, brushes or glue sticks, sufficient staff or volunteers if necessary.

NOTES FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS:

Ensure sufficient time and resources for this activity so that it is relaxed and enjoyable.

You might first have to show how to prepare a collage.

Offer support, suggestions and encouragement to participants about their choices and encourage them to discuss with each other, to learn and build friendships.

Ask participants why they chose certain materials, allowing them time to think and respond.

OUTCOMES: reduce ageism, improve social relationships, increase well-being, psycho-social improvements.

EVALUATION METHOD TO BE USED: Participant feedback in person and observations.





INTERGENERATIONAL RADIO SHOW AGES:

≥ 12 YEARS

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

Radio programming has been used in hospitals for years to improve patients' well-being. It creates a sense of connection with others by playing music, taking personal requests and passing on messages. It is now being used in some communities and schools to:

- change the perceptions of older people with regard to younger people and vice versa;
- build participants' understanding of their community and increase community cohesion;
- develop skills and work with others to produce and present a regular radio show;
- encourage participants to provide creative input to broadcasting.

The three broad elements of an intergenerational radio programme are training people in using equipment effectively, creating a radio programme or podcast and ensuring that the audience are active participants and listeners, give meaningful feedback and collaborate in making future programmes and podcasts

Young people reach out to everyone in their community, with support from school staff and community partners, to identify people who wish to be involved in the programme. The young people then speak to them by telephone or visit them. The information they collect on what people would like to listen to helps them to create a programme. This activity connects people through an online radio station that plays music, takes requests and provides information specifically for older people in the community.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

Young people will be taught how to use the technology required for a radio show and to interview older adults. Older adults should be able to express their preferences for music and other interests in person or by telephone.

LOCATION: SETTINGS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE PAST: Care homes, schools, hospitals, community centres, workplaces.

RELEVANT FOR: Individuals, volunteers and people working in health, social care, education, child care, community development and workforce development.

RESOURCES:

For young people:

- online radio technology and staff trained in information technology
- soundproof room
- access to the Internet
- portable recording equipment for interviews
- writing materials for interviews.

For adult listeners:

- internet access, tablet, telephone
- training and support in use of technology, if necessary

NOTE FOR ACTIVITY LEADERS:

- To identify older people to consult and engage in the radio show, the information must reach all parts of the community in accessible language.





- Safeguarding must be in place when students visit or have telephone conversations with older adults accompanied by staff.
- Information technology support and training may be necessary for some older adults.

ADAPTATIONS:

- The programme content should be flexible to accommodate the preferences and interests of older adults.
- The content can be adapted according to circumstance, such as continuation of programmes during a pandemic.
- Older adults can be invited to create their own playlists and programmes.
- The programme could include podcasts and types of entertainment linked to activities in the community.

OUTCOMES:

- reduce ageism
- improve social relationships
- increase well-being
- psycho-social improvements
- improve skills.

EVALUATION METHOD TO BE USED:

Participant feedback in person, surveys, observation.





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Research in intergenerational projects

Intergenerational projects

Introduction and definition

In modern society, intergenerational projects have become powerful tools for promoting inclusion, encouraging knowledge exchange among different age groups, and fostering intercultural understanding. Research is crucial in these projects, providing not only an empirical basis for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of intergenerational initiatives but also contributing to the generation of new insights and the development of best practices.

Intergenerational projects are **initiatives that bring together people of different ages to work together, share experiences and learn from each other. These projects aim to bridge generational gaps and promote social cohesion by encouraging interaction and mutual understanding between people of different ages.**

By providing opportunities for meaningful interaction and cooperation between younger and older people, these projects break down stereotypes and barriers often associated with age. They create environments where different perspectives, experiences and skills can be shared and valued, fostering empathy, respect and mutual support among participants.

Furthermore, intergenerational projects contribute to the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations, ensuring that valuable insights and traditions are preserved and passed on to future generations. They also promote a sense of belonging and community by creating spaces where people of all ages can come together, network and work towards common goals.

Types of intergenerational projects

Intergenerational initiatives cover a wide range of activities and programmes designed to facilitate interaction and cooperation between different age groups. Here are some different forms of intergenerational initiatives:





- Shared learning programmes: they bring together people from different generations to learn together, share knowledge and develop new skills. These programmes often include activities such as classes, workshops or seminars where participants of all ages can engage in educational activities and share their expertise.
- Community service projects: they involve young and older people working together to address community needs and make a positive impact. Participants work together on a variety of service-oriented activities, such as volunteering at local charities, organising environmental clean-ups, or assisting vulnerable populations.
- Mentoring programmes: they bring together individuals from different generations to promote learning, personal growth and professional development. Older adults serve as mentors, providing guidance, support and advice to younger mentees based on their life experiences and expertise. These programmes provide valuable opportunities for skill building, networking and personal enrichment.
- Intergenerational arts and cultural programmes: they bring people of all ages together to explore and celebrate creativity, cultural heritage and artistic expression. Participants engage in collaborative art projects, musical performances, storytelling or cultural celebrations, fostering connections and appreciation for diverse forms of expression.
- Intergenerational housing and community living: Intergenerational housing and community living arrangements create living environments where people of different ages live together, sharing living spaces, resources and social activities. These arrangements promote mutual support, companionship and interdependence among residents, fostering a sense of belonging and community.
- Intergenerational wellness programmes: they focus on promoting health, well-being and active ageing across generations. Participants engage in physical activities, health education sessions and wellness workshops together, promoting healthy lifestyles and social connections across age groups.

These different forms of intergenerational initiatives highlight the breadth and diversity of programmes that aim to promote interaction, understanding and cooperation between people of different ages. Each initiative offers unique opportunities for learning, personal growth and community building, helping to promote social cohesion and inclusiveness across generations.





The importance of Research in Intergenerational projects

Research plays a crucial role in intergenerational projects for several reasons, highlighting its importance in providing evidence-based insights and evaluating project effectiveness.

- Evidence-based insights: research provides a systematic and rigorous approach to understanding the dynamics, challenges and benefits of intergenerational interactions. Through data collection and analysis, researchers can identify trends, patterns and underlying factors that influence the success of intergenerational projects. This empirical evidence helps project leaders and stakeholders making informed decisions about programme design, implementation strategies and resource allocation.
- Evaluate project effectiveness: the systematic evaluation of intergenerational projects allows to assess their impact, outcomes and effectiveness. Using methods such as surveys, interviews, observation and statistical analysis, researchers can measure the extent to which projects achieve their intended goals and objectives. This evaluation process helps to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement, informing future programme iterations and improving overall project quality.
- Identifying best practices and effective strategies for promoting positive intergenerational interactions: by studying successful projects and analysing the factors that contribute to their success, researchers can distil key principles and recommendations for practitioners and policy-makers. These evidence-based guidelines serve as valuable resources for improving programme design, implementation and sustainability.
- Filling knowledge gaps and improving our understanding of intergenerational dynamics and their impact on individuals, families and communities: by exploring new issues, theories and methodologies, researchers contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of intergenerational studies. This continuous learning process deepens our understanding of the complexity of intergenerational relations and informs future research directions.
- Promoting accountability and transparency within intergenerational projects: research provides an objective basis for decision making and programme evaluation. By adhering to rigorous research standards and methodologies, project leaders demonstrate their commitment to evidence-based practice and responsible stewardship of resources. This transparency fosters





trust among stakeholders and enhances the credibility and legitimacy of intergenerational initiatives.

Research plays a central role in intergenerational projects, as highlighted in the article "Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in Intergenerational Programming: A Scoping Review" (Jarrott SE et al., 2021). The findings underline the importance of measuring the means by which outcomes are achieved in intergenerational programmes. By using systematic quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, researchers can identify effective practices that contribute to the success and sustainability of intergenerational initiatives. These evidence-based practices not only support public interest and policy initiatives, but also build on established theories that inform intergenerational programming. In addition, the review shows that innovative practices from single-generation settings can be adapted and applied in intergenerational contexts, further enhancing programme effectiveness. Continued investigation of the relationship between practice and outcomes is essential to advancing the development and health of intergenerational programmes that serve diverse participants and programming needs. In this way, research serves as a catalyst for the growth and development of intergenerational partnerships, benefiting stakeholders and participants alike.

Foundations of the Scientific Method

The scientific method is the process by which science seeks to acquire objective, reliable, verifiable and communicable knowledge of reality. This approach is based on fundamental characteristics that distinguish it.

- Empiricism and Measurability: the scientific method relies on observation and experiment as the main tools for gathering empirical and measurable evidence about reality. This means that hypotheses and theories must be supported by concrete and verifiable evidence through direct observation or controlled experimentation.
- Formulating hypotheses and theories, which are subjected to empirical verification. Hypotheses are statements that can be tested by experiment, while theories are explanatory models that complement existing knowledge and can be validated or refuted on the basis of the evidence gathered.
- Iterative process, involving the continual revision and reformulation of hypotheses and theories based on the results of observations and experiments. This means that scientific conclusions





are not final, but are subject to modification and updating based on new evidence and discoveries.

In terms of conducting scientific research, the process can be divided into several stages:

- Problem Selection and Hypothesis Definition: scientific research begins with the identification of a problem or research question. Next, are formulated hypotheses, that represent possible explanations or predictions about the identified problem.
- Formulating the research design: once the hypotheses have been defined, a research design is developed. It outlines the plan and manner in which the data needed to test the hypotheses will be collected. This includes the selection of participants, the design of data collection instruments, and the planning of experimental procedures.
- Data collection: in this stage, the information or data needed to test the formulated hypotheses is collected. This can be done through various methods such as direct observation, interviews, questionnaires or controlled experiments.
- Data coding and analysis: once the data have been collected, they are coded and analysed to extract relevant information and to identify any patterns or relationships between the variables studied. This stage may involve the use of statistical or qualitative techniques to interpret the data collected.
- Interpretation of the results: finally, the results of the data analysis are interpreted in the light of the hypotheses formulated. This process involves assessing the consistency of the results with the initial hypotheses and considering the implications and limitations of the results.

In summary, the scientific method is a rigorous and systematic approach to knowledge based on observation, experimentation and the formulation of hypotheses and theories. The conduct of scientific research follows a well-defined process involving the selection of a problem, the formulation of hypotheses, the collection and analysis of data, and the interpretation of results.

From theory to practice

Problem Selection and Hypothesis Definition

In the early stages of scientific research, the foundation is laid with problem selection and hypothesis definition. This crucial step involves identifying a specific problem or research question





that will serve as the focus of the study. Once the research topic has been identified, it is essential to conduct a thorough literature review on the chosen topic. This literature review helps to refine the research question and facilitates the formulation of a well-defined hypothesis.

The literature review process can take several forms, depending on the researcher's approach and objectives. One approach is a systematic review, in which the researcher systematically identifies and appraises relevant studies in the field. This method involves establishing specific criteria for the selection of studies and aims to comprehensively analyse the existing literature to inform the research question and hypothesis.

Alternatively, researchers may choose to conduct a traditional literature review, which focuses on a narrower area directly related to the research topic. Unlike a systematic review, a traditional literature review may not adhere to strict criteria for the selection of studies, but rather delve deeply into the existing literature that is relevant to the research question.

Regardless of the approach taken, the literature review serves as a critical step in problem selection and hypothesis generation. By synthesising existing knowledge and identifying gaps in the literature, researchers can refine their research question and develop a clear hypothesis to guide their study. This systematic approach ensures that the research is grounded in existing evidence and makes a meaningful contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

Bibliographic databases are essential resources for conducting thorough and accurate bibliographic research, particularly in the social sciences. Here are some of the main bibliographic databases available in the field:

- PubMed: managed by the United States National Library of Medicine, it is one of the largest resources for medical and scientific literature, including social science research relevant to health and public policy.
- Scopus: overseen by Elsevier, it covers a wide range of scientific, technical, medical and humanities disciplines, including the social sciences. It provides access to an extensive collection of peer-reviewed articles, conferences, books and more.
- Web of Science: it serves as a platform that indexes a wide range of academic and scientific publications, including social science research. In addition to journal articles, it includes citations, abstracts and bibliographic information useful for research.





- Google Scholar: a free search engine, it allows users to search for academic articles, theses, books and more, covering various social science disciplines. It is particularly useful for finding open access publications and material that is not readily available elsewhere.
- PsycINFO: maintained by the American Psychological Association, it covers literature in psychology and related fields, including social psychology and the behavioural sciences. It includes peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertations and other scholarly materials.
- JSTOR: it provides access to an extensive collection of scholarly journals in the humanities and social sciences, offering historical and contemporary research materials.
- ERIC (Education Resources Information Center): this database, maintained by the US Department of Education, focuses on literature related to education and education research, including social aspects of education.
- OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue): it is an online database provided by libraries that catalogue their holdings, including books, journals, and other materials related to the social sciences.

These databases represent a selection of the major resources available for conducting bibliographic research in the social sciences. Each offers a unique set of resources and functionalities designed to meet specific research needs and objectives.

The transition from literature analysis to hypothesis formulation is a critical step in scientific research, particularly in the social sciences. The validity of a theory depends on its translation into empirically testable hypotheses. If a theory lacks specificity and does not generate testable hypotheses, it cannot be empirically tested. Empirical testability is therefore the hallmark of scientific rigour.

In order to explain a social phenomenon through empirical investigation, theoretical propositions must be articulated into specific hypotheses. A hypothesis is essentially a proposition that implies the relationship between several concepts. It emerges from a synthesis of data, experiential knowledge and theoretical frameworks.

The path from theory to hypothesis to theory is a cyclical process. The hypothesis, once formulated, must be empirically tested through the collection and analysis of data to determine the existence (or absence) of a relationship between phenomena X and Y. Rigorous empirical testing involves meticulous methodological approaches and the careful use of techniques to corroborate findings.





In summary, the move from literature analysis to hypothesis formulation is an integral part of the scientific endeavour, particularly in the social sciences. It underscores the importance of grounding theoretical propositions in empirical reality and highlights the iterative nature of scientific inquiry. Through this process, hypotheses serve as conduits for empirical investigation, facilitating the refinement and validation of theoretical frameworks.

Formulating the research design

In developing a research design for an intergenerational project, several key steps need to be carefully considered to ensure its effectiveness and validity. These steps include the selection of participants, the design of data collection instruments and the planning of experimental procedures.

- Selection of participants: it is a crucial aspect of any research project, particularly in intergenerational studies where the involvement of individuals from different age groups is essential. This process involves identifying and recruiting participants who represent different age groups and backgrounds to ensure the relevance and inclusivity of the project. Researchers need to consider factors such as age, gender, socio-economic status, cultural background and geographical location when selecting participants. In addition, efforts should be made to recruit participants from a variety of settings, such as schools, community centres and residential care facilities, in order to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives.
- Design of data collection instruments: once participants have been selected, researchers need to design appropriate data collection instruments to gather relevant information for the study. These may include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observation protocols or standardised assessments, depending on the research objectives and methodology. Data collection instruments should be carefully designed to address specific research questions and objectives, while being culturally sensitive and age-appropriate. Researchers should pilot test their instruments to ensure clarity, validity and reliability before administering them to participants.
- Planning experimental procedures: in intergenerational research, experimental procedures may vary depending on the nature of the study and the research questions being addressed. This may involve designing structured activities, interventions or workshops that facilitate interaction and communication between participants of different ages. Researchers should carefully plan and implement experimental procedures to ensure consistency, fairness and ethical conduct throughout the project. This may include obtaining informed consent from participants, establishing clear





guidelines for participation, and addressing any potential risks or concerns associated with the research activities.

Overall, formulating a research design for an intergenerational project requires careful consideration of participant selection, data collection instrument design, and experimental procedures. By attending to these key steps, researchers can ensure the rigour, validity and ethical integrity of their research, while maximising the potential for meaningful insights and outcomes.

A final remark on the formulation of the research design relates to the sample with which the research project is to be carried out. In scientific research, the selection of a representative and large sample is essential to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. A representative sample consists of participants or study units that accurately reflect the demographics of the target population, including factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and others deemed relevant.

Conversely, a large sample size allows research findings to be generalised to a wider population, reducing the likelihood of random error and providing more accurate estimates of the phenomena being studied. A representative and large sample also strengthens both the internal and external validity of the study. Internal validity refers to the accuracy with which causal inferences can be made within the research context. By reducing the risk of bias due to non-random selection or small sample size, a representative and large sample enhances internal validity. Meanwhile, external validity concerns the extent to which research findings can be extrapolated to other contexts or populations. A large and representative sample increases the credibility and applicability of research findings to analogous situations.

In summary, the careful selection of a representative and substantial sample is central to ensuring the accuracy, reliability and generalisability of research findings. It serves as a sound basis for informing practice, shaping policy and guiding future research efforts, and enables meaningful and applicable conclusions to be drawn.

Data collection

Intergenerational research projects typically use a variety of data collection methods to gain a comprehensive insight into the dynamics and interactions between individuals of different age groups. These methods typically include:





- Surveys and questionnaires

They are often used to collect quantitative data on participants' attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and demographic information. These instruments often use standardised scales or Likert-type items to measure the variables of interest and can be administered online, in person or by mail.

- Interviews

They are a valuable qualitative data collection method used to explore participants' experiences, perceptions and narratives in depth. Semi-structured or open-ended interviews allow for flexibility in questioning, enabling researchers to explore specific issues or themes related to intergenerational relationships and interactions.

- Focus groups

They involve small, facilitated discussions with a diverse group of participants to explore shared experiences, opinions and perspectives on intergenerational issues. These sessions encourage interaction and exchange between participants and provide rich qualitative data on social dynamics and generational differences.

- Observational studies

They involve direct observation of intergenerational interactions in naturalistic settings, such as family gatherings, community events, or intergenerational programmes. Researchers observe behaviours, communication patterns and non-verbal cues to understand the dynamics and quality of relationships between different age groups.

- Document analysis

It involves the study of written or digital records, such as archival materials, policy documents, or social media content, to gain insights into societal attitudes, cultural norms, and historical trends related to intergenerational dynamics. This method complements other data collection approaches by providing contextual information and background knowledge.

- Mixed methods approach

Many intergenerational research projects use mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of intergenerational





relations. By triangulating data from different sources, researchers can corroborate findings and gain deeper insights into complex phenomena.

Overall, the choice of data collection methods in intergenerational research projects depends on the research questions, objectives and the nature of the phenomena under investigation. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, researchers can capture the multifaceted nature of intergenerational dynamics and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of generational relations and interactions.

Data coding and analysis

During the data coding and analysis phase of an intergenerational research project, researchers organise and interpret the data collected in order to find meaningful patterns and draw conclusions. This involves preparing the data, assigning labels or codes (coding), analysing the data to identify trends and relationships, and interpreting the findings. Researchers also compare findings from different sources (triangulation) and reflect on their own biases (reflexivity) to ensure the credibility of the findings. Overall, this stage helps researchers gain insights into intergenerational relationships and inform strategies to promote understanding between different age groups.

Interpretation of the results

In the final stage of research design for an intergenerational project, researchers focus on interpreting the results of data analysis. This step involves analysing the findings to understand their implications, significance and relevance to the research questions and objectives.

During interpretation, researchers examine patterns, trends and relationships identified in the data to draw meaningful conclusions. They consider how these findings fit with existing literature, theoretical frameworks and real-world implications.

In addition, researchers explore the broader implications of the findings for intergenerational relations, societal dynamics, and potential interventions or policies. They discuss the practical implications of their findings and offer insights into how they contribute to the understanding of intergenerational interactions and their impact on society.

Overall, the interpretation of results is a crucial step that allows researchers to derive meaning from the data collected and provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of intergenerational relations.





Practical exercise

Exercise: Developing a research design for an intergenerational project

Objective: The aim of this exercise is to put into practice the knowledge gained about the process of developing a research design for an intergenerational project.

Step 1: Identifying the problem and formulating hypotheses

Start by identifying a problem or research question related to intergenerational dynamics. For example, you might want to investigate the impact of participation in intergenerational programmes on the emotional well-being of older adults.

Formulate a hypothesis that provides a possible explanation or prediction for the problem you have identified. For example, you might hypothesise that "participation in intergenerational programmes improves the emotional well-being of older adults".

Step 2: Developing the research design

Develop a research design that outlines how the data needed to test the formulated hypothesis will be collected. This includes:

- Selecting participants: Identify who will participate in the study, such as older adults and young people involved in an intergenerational programme at a community centre.
- Designing data collection instruments: Designing questionnaires or conducting interviews to gather information about the emotional well-being of older adults and their interactions with younger participants.
- Plan experimental procedures: Identify specific activities that participants will engage in during the intergenerational programme and develop methods to assess their emotional well-being.

Step 3: Data collection

Collect the necessary information or data to test the hypothesis formulated. Use different methods such as direct observation, interviews, questionnaires or controlled experiments. For example, administer questionnaires to older adult participants before and after the intergenerational programme to measure changes in their emotional well-being.





Step 4: Data coding and analysis

Once data collection is complete, code and analyse the data to extract relevant information and identify any patterns or relationships between the variables being studied. Use statistical techniques to compare pre- and post-program data and assess changes in the emotional well-being of older adults.

Step 5: Interpreting the results

Finally, interpret the results of the data analysis in relation to the hypothesis formulated. Assess the consistency of the results with the initial hypothesis and consider the implications and limitations of the findings. For example, if the data indicate a significant improvement in the emotional well-being of older adults following participation in the intergenerational programme, this suggests that the programme is effective in improving the emotional well-being of older adults.

Self-assessment questionnaire

Question: Which of the following intergenerational initiatives focuses on promoting health, well-being and active ageing across generations?

- A) Joint learning programmes
- B) Community service projects
- C) Mentoring programmes
- D) Intergenerational arts and culture programmes
- E) Intergenerational wellness programmes

Feedback: This question effectively tests understanding of the different types of intergenerational initiatives discussed in the text. Option E, 'intergenerational wellness programmes', is the correct answer as it specifically mentions the promotion of health, well-being and active ageing across generations, which is consistent with the description given in the text. Options A, B, C and D represent other types of intergenerational initiatives mentioned in the text, but they do not focus specifically on wellness promotion.

Question: What is one of the key roles of research in intergenerational projects?





- A) Identifying participants for intergenerational initiatives
- B) Providing financial support for intergenerational programmes
- C) Evaluating the effectiveness of intergenerational projects
- D) Organising intergenerational events and activities

Feedback: The correct answer is C) Evaluating the effectiveness of intergenerational projects. The passage discusses how research enables the systematic evaluation of intergenerational projects to assess their impact, outcomes and effectiveness, helping to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Option A) relates to the selection of participants, while option B) relates to financial support and option D) relates to the organisation of events, which are not directly related to the role of research in intergenerational projects as described in the passage.

Question: True or False: The scientific method involves a linear process with fixed steps that cannot be revisited or changed.

Answer: False. The passage describes the scientific method as an iterative process involving the constant revision and reformulation of hypotheses and theories based on new evidence and discoveries. This means that scientific conclusions are not final and can be modified on the basis of new evidence, suggesting that the process is not strictly linear or fixed. Therefore, the correct answer is False.

Question: What is a crucial step in the early stages of scientific research, especially in the social sciences?

- a) Conducting experiments to gather empirical evidence
- b) Reviewing existing literature to refine the research question and formulate hypotheses
- c) Develop a research design to collect data
- d) Establish criteria for selecting participants

Feedback: The correct answer is b) reviewing existing literature to refine the research question and formulate hypotheses. This step, known as the literature review, helps researchers synthesise existing knowledge, identify gaps in the literature and develop a clear hypothesis to guide their study. Conducting experiments and developing a research design comes later in the research process, after the research question and hypothesis have been defined.





Question: What method is commonly used in intergenerational research projects to explore participants' experiences, perceptions and narratives in depth?

- a) Surveys and questionnaires
- b) Interviews
- c) Focus groups
- d) Observational studies

Feedback: The correct answer is b) interviews. Interviews are valuable qualitative data collection methods that allow researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions and narratives in depth. Semi-structured or open-ended interviews offer flexibility in questioning, allowing the exploration of specific issues or themes related to intergenerational relations and interactions. While surveys, focus groups and observational studies are also used in intergenerational research, interviews are particularly suited to exploring rich qualitative data.

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Interaction in intergenerational projects

1. Intergenerational Communication and Theoretical Models

Interaction represents the two-way exchange through which two or more entities influence each other's actions, behaviours or states, producing a combined effect that transcends the individual actions of each entity involved. Communication serves as the cornerstone of human interactions, acting as the conduit through which individuals convey information, express emotions, negotiate meanings, and forge connections with others. It acts as a bridge, linking perspectives, intentions and individual experiences, thereby facilitating mutual understanding and the cultivation of meaningful relationships. Through effective communication, interactions can be enriched, coordinated and made more effective by enabling individuals to share ideas, resolve conflicts and foster social bonds. This underlines the importance of discussing intergenerational communication in this part of the training.

Intergenerational communication

Intergenerational dialogue is a two-way exchange between people of different ages that enriches both sides by sharing perspectives, mentalities, knowledge and ways of life Kaplan, Sanchez and Hoffman - professors of Intergenerational programmes and aging at Pennsylvania State University, sociology at the University of Granada and Socio-gerontology at North-West University in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, respectively - in their 2017 book "Intergenerational Pathways to a Sustainable Society" argue that intergenerational relationships play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining trust between individuals, especially at a time when social cohesion is gradually waning (Kaplan et al., 2016).





Intergenerational communication (IC) encompasses a **wide range of interactions between different generations**. The concept of generation can be interpreted through different lenses, including **role relationships** (e.g., grandparents and grandchildren, aging parents and adult children), **age cohorts** (e.g., baby boomers, generation Xers, millennials), or **developmental stages** (e.g., adolescents, middle-aged adults, elders). These different definitions stem from different theoretical frameworks, such as life-span perspectives, family dynamics or intergroup theories, each of which highlights different facets of intergenerational communication and relationships.

Theoretical Foundations

The Lifespan Approach

The Lifespan Approach asserts that **growth is an ongoing process in which individuals experience multidimensional changes throughout their lives**, encompassing physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological and social dimensions. These changes are unique to each individual and are influenced by personal experiences within specific historical and social contexts. Within this framework, **intergenerational communication (IC) is characterised by fluctuating levels of quality and quantity**, with both intimacy and distance being experienced simultaneously due to various internal and external factors. For example, the dynamics of grandparent-grandchild relationships may change over time, with close interactions decreasing as grandchildren enter college or due to factors such as parental divorce, grandparents' health problems, geographical distance, or grandchildren's attitudes towards ageing. Lifespan researchers who study IC consider individual developmental needs and processes, and how these changes affect communication patterns over time. They focus on understanding relationships in transition due to developmental changes in one or both parties, as well as how relationships evolve with age, such as changes in parent-child dynamics as parents enter older adulthood.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposes that an **individual's self-concept consists of personal and social identities**. Personal identities involve idiosyncratic characteristics, while social identities involve identification and emotional attachment to meaningful social groups. Social groups, such as age, race, nationality or religious beliefs, are constructed labels for individuals who share certain characteristics. **The social status and treatment of a group affects the well-being of its**





members and shapes interactions within and outside the group. Applying SIT to intergenerational communication (IC), it can be examined in terms of 'age group' and 'generational cohort'. Age groups categorise individuals by chronological age, influenced by developmental growth and social structure. These groups, including children, adolescents, young adults, middle-aged adults and older adults, have evolved over time. Conversely, age cohorts group individuals based on significant social, cultural and historical events. Examples include the Greatest Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials, whose experiences are shaped by events such as the Great Depression and technological advances. Social identity, influenced by shared experiences, guides interactions within and across age groups and cohorts. From a SIT perspective, **IC becomes an intergroup phenomenon where interactions are influenced by perceived stereotypical characteristics associated with age groups or cohorts**. Researchers in this field are investigating stereotypical characteristics, perceptions of in-group and out-group members, and how age identity affects IC both positively and negatively in different contexts such as care, family, work and health.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that **individuals adapt their speech styles during interactions to either match or differentiate from their interlocutors, driven by relational, identity, or conversational goals**. This adaptation, referred to as convergence or divergence, increases satisfaction and fosters willingness to engage in future interactions. In the field of intergenerational communication (IC), researchers investigate two accommodation strategies: **over-accommodation and under-accommodation**.

Over-accommodation involves adapting speech to the perceived needs of interlocutors, often influenced by age stereotypes. For example, younger people may speak slower or at a higher pitch when communicating with older adults, assuming that they are suffering from age-related hearing loss. However, an overly accommodating approach may cause older interlocutors to feel offended, thereby reducing communication satisfaction. Conversely, under-accommodation occurs when individuals fail to adapt their speech to the needs of their interlocutors, possibly to assert their own identity. For example, older adults may disclose sensitive topics, leaving younger interlocutors unsure of how to respond.





CAT intersects with social identity theory, where assertions of age identity can disrupt IC satisfaction through accommodation strategies. Research examines grandparent-grandchild communication, considering variables such as age, distance and frequency of contact. **Cultural differences also influence IC, with cultures that emphasise respect and obligation having fewer satisfying experiences.** **Age-related norms within a culture predict IC satisfaction**, as younger individuals accommodate older counterparts to show respect, although this accommodation may not truly satisfy younger interlocutors.

Models of Intergenerational Communication

The *Communication Predicament Model of Aging* (CPM) delves into the complexities of Intergenerational Communication (IC) by examining the **activation of negative age stereotypes when young individuals perceive age-related cues**. This model illustrates a cyclical pattern where older interactants' communication is constrained, reinforcing age stereotypes held by younger counterparts. Speech modification, including under- and over-accommodation outlined in the CPM, can adversely impact the self-esteem and communication competence of older adults, while diminishing the willingness of younger individuals to engage in IC. **Researchers using this model aim to identify age stereotypes triggering this process and explore the effects of modified communication on older adults' responses.**

Moreover, older individuals may develop a sense of "learned helplessness" and conform to such feelings after repeated exposure, particularly evident in healthcare settings. In contrast, the *Stereotype Activation Model of IC* considers **both positive and negative age stereotypes, examining various factors influencing younger interlocutors' decisions to modify their speech**. This model directs research towards exploring **intra-, interpersonal, intergroup, and context-based variables** that may shape IC schemas available to younger interlocutors, avoiding a problematic framing of IC as suggested by the CPM.

The *Intergenerational Solidarity and Ambivalence Model* posits an **inherent tension between parents and children that leads to mixed feelings about their relationship and each other throughout life**. These conflicting emotions, such as dependence and autonomy, are heightened during transitional periods, such as a child's adolescence or an adult child's assumption of caregiving responsibilities for ageing parents. This model seeks to understand the **coexistence of affection and conflict within family intergenerational relationships and how individuals**





navigate these conflicting expectations, feelings and demands within the context of intergenerational communication (IC).

2. How to promote intergenerational communication and interaction

From the theoretical to the practical

Using the Life Span Approach, Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), the Intergenerational Solidarity and Ambivalence Model, and models of intergenerational communication, we can develop strategies to improve communication and interaction across generations:

- Life-span approach: Encourage intergenerational engagement by considering the life cycle of individuals, recognising the different developmental stages and needs of each age group. For example, develop tailor-made programmes that engage children, young adults and senior citizens in activities appropriate to their abilities and interests.
- Social identity theory: Foster a sense of belonging and shared identity between generations through activities that emphasise common elements of life experience. Create events that celebrate shared cultural traditions or address common social challenges to promote intergenerational cohesion and identity.
- Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT): Promote effective intergenerational communication by adapting communication styles to the needs and understanding of others. Encourage seniors to use simpler language with younger people and vice versa, and encourage young people to practice patience and active listening with seniors.
- Model of intergenerational solidarity and ambivalence: Promote solidarity and reduce ambivalence between generations through joint activities and mutual support. Develop intergenerational volunteer programmes that engage youth and seniors in community service, strengthening a sense of belonging and mutual solidarity.
- Intergenerational communication models: Implement specific communication strategies to facilitate intergenerational interaction, such as storytelling and sharing personal experiences. Organise storytelling sessions where seniors and youth share life experiences, building understanding and connection across generations.





Guidelines for promoting intergenerational interaction

From theory to practice, there are guidelines to follow to promote intergenerational interaction and communication. Let's look at them together.

- Active listening: Incorporating the concept of 'active listening' into intergenerational communication strategies can be highly beneficial in bridging generational gaps. Active listening goes beyond mere auditory reception; it involves mental awareness and emotional understanding. It involves paying full attention to the message being communicated, free from distraction or bias, and actively seeking to understand the other person's perspective. This practice requires empathy and open-mindedness, facilitating deeper and more meaningful intergenerational communication. Active listening also fosters mutual respect and understanding between younger and older people, laying a solid foundation for positive, long-lasting intergenerational relationships.
- Open dialogue: Expanding on this theme, encouraging open dialogue is key to bridging the generation gap. Fostering an environment that encourages individuals to express themselves freely without fear of judgement or reprisal is paramount. It empowers programme participants to openly share their thoughts, concerns and ideas, fostering mutual understanding and empathy. By encouraging open dialogue, we create a space where different perspectives are valued and respected, laying the foundation for meaningful intergenerational connections. This approach fosters an atmosphere of inclusiveness and acceptance where people of all ages feel heard, understood and valued, promoting cohesion and unity across generations.
- Define objectives: Setting clear goals and creating activities with shared objectives play a crucial role in promoting intergenerational communication and cooperation. Activities that involve people of different ages in pursuits with common goals can serve as powerful catalysts for interaction and cooperation. By focusing participants on a common goal, these activities promote teamwork, mutual support and the exchange of ideas and experiences. They also encourage individuals to work together towards a common outcome, fostering a sense of achievement and camaraderie across generations. These activities can be designed to encourage sharing experiences, problem solving together and building meaningful relationships based on common interests and goals. By providing opportunities for intergenerational





engagement in activities with common goals, we can improve communication, understanding and connection between people of different ages, ultimately fostering stronger and more harmonious intergenerational relationships.

- Clarify expectations: Clarifying expectations is crucial to mitigating miscommunication that occurs when different generations have different expectations of how things should be done. To avoid misunderstandings and promote effective intergenerational communication, it is essential to clearly articulate expectations and establish transparent guidelines. By setting clear expectations, both younger and older people can align their actions and behaviours, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. This clarity helps prevent conflict and promotes a more harmonious intergenerational dynamic. In addition, by openly discussing expectations, participants can gain insight into each other's perspectives, increasing empathy and fostering a culture of respect and cooperation across generations. Ultimately, by clarifying expectations, we pave the way for smoother communication and stronger relationships between people of different ages.
- Fostering respect and empathy: Fostering respect and empathy between generations is essential for positive intergenerational communication. Each generation should be respected for their unique experiences and perspectives, and the value they bring to the table should be recognised. By fostering an environment of respect, individuals of all ages feel valued and appreciated, contributing to a culture of mutual understanding and cooperation. In addition, empathy plays a crucial role in bridging generational divides by enabling individuals to understand and appreciate the challenges and aspirations of others. By cultivating empathy, individuals can put themselves in each other's shoes, fostering compassion and understanding across generations. Ultimately, fostering respect and empathy creates a foundation for meaningful intergenerational relationships based on mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of each other's differences and similarities.
- Sharing and learning: Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience between generations can promote mutual understanding and learning. Intergenerational sharing of knowledge, experiences and life stories can bridge the gap between different age groups and foster empathy and appreciation of each other's perspectives. Older people often have wisdom and historical insights accumulated over a lifetime that they can share with younger generations.





Conversely, younger people can offer fresh ideas, innovative perspectives and technological skills that may be unfamiliar to older generations. By facilitating this exchange, we create opportunities for mutual learning and growth, enabling people of all ages to benefit from each other's unique insights and expertise. This exchange fosters a sense of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation, ultimately enriching the collective knowledge and experience of the community as a whole.

- Adjust the environment: Promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment is essential to encourage intergenerational interaction. By creating physical and social spaces that encourage encounters and conversations between different age groups, we can facilitate meaningful intergenerational connections. These environments should be designed to be welcoming, accessible and inclusive for people of all ages. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance, encouraging people from different generations to engage with each other in a comfortable and supportive environment. By fostering such environments, we not only facilitate intergenerational dialogue, but also promote mutual understanding, empathy and appreciation across generations. Ultimately, these welcoming and inclusive spaces serve as catalysts for building strong and resilient intergenerational relationships, enriching the lives of all involved.
- Involving professionals: The involvement of professionals in the field is essential to support the creation of intergenerational activities in an effective and meaningful way. These professionals bring specialised skills and in-depth knowledge to the design and implementation of programmes involving people of different ages. It is advisable to involve experts in ageing, psychologists, cognitive impairment and communication. In addition, professionals in education, social work, health care and cultural animation can provide valuable resources and tools for developing tailor-made activities. Considering the needs and preferences of the different generations involved, their expertise can ensure that activities are well structured, engaging and culturally sensitive, thus promoting meaningful and positive engagement across all age groups. In addition, professionals can play an important role in facilitating communication and cooperation between generations, providing guidance and support throughout the implementation of intergenerational programmes. With their skills and experience, these professionals make a significant contribution to the creation of intergenerational activities that promote mutual understanding, solidarity and community well-being.





- Intermediary initiatives: Programmes and initiatives specifically designed to encourage interaction between generations can be effective in facilitating communication. These initiatives may include volunteer programmes, study groups, intergenerational courses or workshops. By bringing people of different ages together in structured activities, intergenerational initiatives provide opportunities for meaningful exchange, mutual learning and relationship building across generations. They also create spaces for the exchange of experiences, perspectives and skills, fostering understanding and cooperation between younger and older participants. Such initiatives not only promote intergenerational communication, but also contribute to the development of cohesive and inclusive communities where people of all ages can actively engage and support each other.

3. Benefits of intergenerational interaction

Why is intergenerational interaction important?

Today's older population is in better health, both mentally and physically, than previous generations. They defy the stereotypes of ageing as a period of dependency, disability and decline. Instead, they are resilient, capable and experienced individuals. In fact, many of today's older people would be considered middle-aged if life expectancy were the only measure. With each successive generation over the last century, people have entered their later years with increasingly improved physical and cognitive well-being.

In addition, our ageing society has unique qualities that meet the needs of the younger generation. Older adults are particularly well placed to meet these needs as they actively seek meaningful and productive engagement. They long for meaning in their lives and are eager to contribute to society.

The current ageing population, which represents the largest cohort of older people in history, represents a significant opportunity for society, particularly for the younger generation. The attributes of older people – the often-underestimated benefits of ageing – perfectly match the critical needs of today's youth. Put simply, the qualities and propensity for purpose and engagement of older adults enable them to provide invaluable support to the young people who need it most. This engagement also fulfils the older generation's search for meaning and purpose, thereby promoting their own well-being. Through such interactions, mutually meaningful relationships blossom between the old and the young.





On the other hand, Urie Bronfenbrenner, child psychologist and co-founder of the Head Start preschool programme in the US, was passionate about the idea that children thrive not only in the embrace of their parents, but also through the engagement of other adults who encourage and mentor them.

In this view, intergenerational interaction is of immense importance to young people, providing them with invaluable opportunities for learning and personal development. Engaging with people of different ages exposes young people to a variety of perspectives, experiences and knowledge, enriching their cultural and intellectual horizons. This exchange not only fosters cognitive growth, but also develops emotional intelligence and social skills in young people.

Intergenerational relationships also foster a sense of belonging and mutual support between the younger and older generations. While seniors impart wisdom, values and traditions, the younger generation brings vitality, innovation and fresh insights.

In an era of rapid social, technological and economic change, the importance of intergenerational connection cannot be overstated. It provides young people with the tools to understand the past, navigate the complexities of the present, and prepare for the uncertainties of the future. Moreover, these connections foster a sense of continuity and cohesion within communities, increasing their resilience and collective well-being.

Benefits for older people

Research in recent years has shown that intergenerational programmes can bring many benefits to older people. These include:

- Increased self-esteem
- Improved well-being
- Increased social interaction
- Reduced anxiety
- Improved memory
- Improved physical mobility
- Greater sense of social connectedness





In addition, the sense of acceptance and affection that comes from intergenerational dialogue is particularly valuable in later life, as individuals feel they have meaningful insights to share with younger generations.

Bringing the elderly and children together through such programmes can thus foster the cultivation of new meaning and purpose in old age. In addition, these relationships offer seniors the opportunity to familiarise themselves with emerging trends and technologies, and to gain new perspectives on the world around them.

Benefits for young people

Regular and sustained interaction with older people has many benefits for young people. These include fostering positive attitudes towards ageing and improving social skills. In addition, experts emphasise that children who have an adult mentor in addition to their parents can gain significant benefits. These include the acquisition of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and social interaction.

These aspects are crucial for individuals to make a meaningful contribution to society and to succeed in both academic and professional life. They represent attitudes and strategies essential for effective navigation in an increasingly complex world, qualities that older people can pass on through their life experiences.

In addition, older adults can help young people develop their talents, knowledge and interpersonal skills. Their years of experience give them a unique ability to communicate and model non-cognitive skills that are essential for young people's development. The perspective that comes with age allows older adults to focus on what really matters, and to foster the growth of social skills and a sense of purpose in the young people with whom they build meaningful relationships.

Moreover, the benefits of intergenerational pairing are reciprocal. Research shows that bringing young and older people together has positive outcomes for both parties. While older adults contribute to the well-being of the next generation, they also experience fulfilment and purpose in their own lives. This mutual benefit underscores the importance of intergenerational programmes.

Initiating a positive intergenerational dialogue between older people and children has significant benefits and serves as a basis for:





- Promoting active and safer communities by encouraging understanding, empathy and co-operation across the generations.
- Addressing and reducing disparities and inequalities by promoting mutual respect and shared experiences between people of different ages.
- Tackling social isolation and loneliness among older people by providing opportunities for meaningful interaction and connection with younger generations.
- Cultivate and maintain valuable relationships that bridge the generation gap and contribute to a sense of belonging and social support.
- Improve overall health and psychological well-being by facilitating social engagement, cognitive stimulation and emotional support through intergenerational interactions.
- Facilitate digital connectedness of older people by promoting intergenerational sharing of technological knowledge and skills, thus enabling older people to adapt and participate in the digital age.

4. Intergenerational interaction projects

Old's Cool Toolkit

Citadel Youth Centre's intergenerational project, Old's Cool, was launched in August 2015 in UK. The aim of the project is to encourage and support young people at risk of disengaging from school, to facilitate intergenerational activities with older people and to present a record of their work to the wider community.

As part of the project, this [toolkit](#) has been produced to share the Old's Cool model of intergenerational practice and highlight good practice when working in partnership with schools.

Intergenerational learning: exchanges between young and old | Jurriën Mentink | TEDxAmsterdamED

We invite you to watch [this film](#) about the creation of an intergenerational learning model that has had an incredible impact on its participants.

By offering students free accommodation in nursing homes in exchange for spending time with the residents, this solution proposed by a Dutch student has inspired one of the most beautiful and effective intergenerational learning models in the Netherlands.





The one described in the film shows another way of connecting generations through reciprocal activities that benefit both groups.

An intergenerational pre-school and day care

[Apples and Honey Nightingale House](#) is a small Intergenerational pre-school and day care for all children from 3 months to five years. In their own bungalow within the grounds of Nightingale House, a care home for older people, the children develop a deeper understanding of the human life cycle and respect for others from their daily interactions with their older friends at Nightingale.

Their nursery is a particularly warm and caring environment that provides unique opportunities for children to flourish as individuals while becoming confident, resilient, and enthusiastic learners.

Thank you for exploring these inspiring intergenerational projects with us. As these examples show, intergenerational initiatives have the power to serve as both models and reflections for building future projects and activities.

These projects illustrate the potential of intergenerational initiatives to promote understanding, respect and meaningful connections across generations.

Let's continue to draw inspiration from them as we strive to create inclusive and enriching environments for all.

Quiz Questions

- True or False: According to Kaplan, Sanchez and Hoffman's book 'Intergenerational Pathways to a Sustainable Society', they argue that intergenerational relationships play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining trust between individuals, especially at a time when social cohesion is gradually waning. True.
- Which of the following best describes the lifespan approach's perspective on intergenerational communication (IC)?
 - It emphasises static and unchanging patterns of communication between generations.
 - It recognises that intergenerational communication is influenced solely by external factors.





- o It views growth as an ongoing process with multidimensional changes that affect individuals throughout their lives.
- o It suggests that intergenerational communication is uniform and consistent across all age groups.

Correct answer: c) It views growth as an ongoing process, with multidimensional changes affecting individuals throughout their lives.

- Which of the following best describes the Social Identity Theory (SIT) perspective on intergenerational communication (IC)?

- o SIT focuses only on personal identities and ignores social identities in communication.
- o SIT suggests that social groups have no influence on interactions within and outside the group.
- o SIT sees IC as an intergroup phenomenon influenced by perceived stereotypical characteristics associated with age groups or cohorts.
- o SIT argues that age groups and generational cohorts have no influence on social identity and interactions.

Correct answer: c) SIT sees IC as an intergroup phenomenon influenced by perceived stereotypical characteristics associated with age groups or cohorts.

- Which of the following is NOT a guideline for promoting intergenerational interaction and communication according to the text?

- o Actively listen to each other's perspectives.
- o Create physical and social spaces that encourage encounters between different age groups.
- o Clarify expectations to avoid misunderstandings.
- o Promoting respect and empathy between generations.

Correct answer: b) Create physical and social spaces that discourage encounters between different age groups.

- True or false: According to the lesson, intergenerational programmes have been shown to bring many benefits to older people, including increased self-esteem, improved physical mobility and reduced anxiety. True.





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Annex 1

Lessons topics detail

Module 2 - YOUTH AND INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT APPROACH

This is a comprehensive module focusing on intergenerational approaches and support systems in youth work.

The aim of this module will be to support and train youth workers to adopt a participative approach when interacting with the young people they work with, providing them with the opportunity to enrich their training with concepts and methods that are often not used in this field. During the lessons, learners will explore various aspects of promoting intergenerational links, participative research and improving support for young carers.

In particular, the lessons will be divided in these lessons and will cover the following topics:

Lesson 1: Youth work, intergenerational approach and young caregivers' support (1h)

In this lesson participants will be introduced to the concept of intergenerational approach and how it is crucial for youth workers to learn how to communicate effectively and engagingly with young people, especially young carers.

Lesson 2: Intergenerational learning, mentoring and reverse mentoring (1h)

During the lesson of this sub-module, the different ways of learning in an informal learning environment will be presented, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each type of learning.

Lesson 3: Methods and techniques to use in intergenerational interventions including the use of arts (1h)

During this lesson, students will gain knowledge about methods and techniques to be used in intergenerational interventions, with a special focus on the use of the arts.

Lesson 4: Research in intergenerational projects (1h)





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In this lesson participants will be provided with more information on how to collect useful and valid data to present the effectiveness of intergenerational programmes with young carers

Lesson 5: Interaction in intergenerational projects (1h)

During this session, strategies and interventions to promote intergenerational interaction and communication will be explored, involving the different actors who can approach young carers: youth workers, parents, teachers, coaches, grandparents.

Lesson 6: WORKSHOP: Writing a participatory intervention targeted to young carers of different care recipients: from the first idea to the impact on target group (2h)

In the last session, participants will be actively involved in a workshop during which they will be guided through the process of developing a participatory intervention aimed at young carers and targeting different care recipients. This workshop will offer a unique opportunity to go from the initial design of the intervention to the evaluation of the impact on the target group.





Annex 3

Template for workshop design

| TITLE OF THE WORKSHOP | |
|--|---|
| INVOLVING YOUNG CARERS IN PLANNING AN INTERVENTION | |
| Module (title and number) | Lesson (title and number) |
| M2 | 6 - Writing a participatory intervention targeted to young carers of different care recipients: from the first idea to the impact on target group |
| Learning objectives | At the end of the workshop participants will have reflected upon the necessary steps to plan a participatory workshop involving young carers |
| Trainers (Name and surname, profession e.g. psychologist, sociologist, educator, social worker, etc.) | |
| Tutors (Name and surname, profession e.g. psychologist, sociologist, educator, social worker, etc.) | |
| Duration | 2 hours |
| Group size | Max 20 – divided in 4 groups of 5 persons each |
| Materials needed (e.g. paper, balls, maker pens, etc.) | Copies of the workshop planning worksheet (one per group) – possibly printed in A3 format Pencils |
| Overall activity description: Introductory/ice-breaking exercise and main activity | |





Ice-breaker: The human knot game: Explain that this ice-breaker is about cooperation and can help getting the right mind-set for the following activity. Form groups of about 10 people each. Have each group standing, facing towards each other, in a circle. Each person should be standing shoulder to shoulder. First, instruct everyone to lift their left hand and reach across to take the hand of someone standing across the circle. Next, have everyone lift their right and reach across to take the hand of another person standing across the circle. Make sure that no one is holding hands with someone standing directly beside the person. To play, the groups must communicate and figure out how to untangle the knot (forming a circle of people) without ever letting go of any hands.

Main activity: To begin with, the facilitator will illustrate the purpose of the exercise, i.e. planning a fictional workshop involving young carers according to a co-design approach. He/she will inform participants that they will be divided into smaller groups and that they will have 45 minutes to

- (1) brainstorm about an idea for a workshop;
- (2) fill in the worksheet according to that.

After this, the following hour will be dedicated to the **presentation of all ideas in plenary** (a spoke-person should be identified for each group) and subsequent discussion (**feedback session**). During the discussion, the exchange of participants' observations on their own work and that of the other groups will be encouraged.

At the end of the workshop through an **evaluation exercise**, each participant will be asked to share one thing that worked well during the workshop and one thing they would have done differently (post-it notes will be used to facilitate sharing).

| | |
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| <p>Hints for the Facilitator</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an inclusive environment: Ensure that all group members feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. Promote mutual respect and encourage active participation by actively listening to lesser-heard voices and encouraging shyer members to share their opinions. ● Remember the goal of the workshop: Before letting groups discuss their ideas it might be good to remember that the goal is to involve YCs in every step of the process ● Establish roles: establish during the group work who will share in the plenary the ideas that have emerged ● Exercise facilitation: If you notice that some participants are uninvolved, try to actively engage them by asking specific questions, asking their opinion on certain topics or encouraging them to share their personal experiences in relation to the topic under discussion. |
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| <p>Evaluation Exercise / Feedback session</p> | <p>In the <u>feedback session</u> pay attention to: (a) highlight if and where the co-design principles have been embedded; (b) elicit exchange between groups, for ex. by asking: have you heard anything from another group which you might use and didn't think about? Have you already experienced anything similar to what was proposed by another group? Any suggestions you can provide?</p> <p>Subsequently, in the <u>evaluation exercise</u>: ask each participant to write on a post-it one thing that worked well during the workshop (green post-it) and one thing that they would have done differently (pink post-it)</p> |
| <p>Bibliography</p> <p>Annexes (e.g. templates and documents useful for carrying on the activity or for expanding and or adapting it at country level if needed)</p> | <p>-</p> <p><u>Workshop planning worksheet</u></p> |





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