Practice 10 • Adaptive Equipment

Intergenerational programs are most effective when adaptive equipment is used as appropriate.

There is a chance that clients in an intergenerational program will need adaptive equipment. The primary reason to consider adaptive equipment is to remove barriers to participation. Examples of adaptive equipment include pencil holders for slip resistance, magnifying glasses or digital projectors for better viewing, and chair supports or lifts for improved positioning. This equipment is often essential to engagement in the activity and with an intergenerational partner.

Application of the Practice

As a teacher or care provider, question what may help remove a barrier or enhance a learning situation. Sometimes creative solutions for adaptations involve Velcro, pillows, longer handles, or pulleys. Organizations are available to consult on particular needs, such as the Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC; www.ttac.vt.edu) for students in Virginia; and online retailers and DIY sites, such as www.enablemart.com, www.seniorssuperstores.com, and www.pinterest.com/otconsulting/diy-adapt/, offer resources.

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Program Ideas

The lack of fit between a person and his or her environment is a primary reason people do not choose to participate in activities. Adaptive equipment is not always needed for activities involving children and elders, but it can ensure that all who want to join can be active and successful.

The right tools can help.

- Look at a need for adaptations any place there is a barrier, including height, size, and location of furniture and materials.
- Equipment can be purchased or adapted in a DIY fashion.
- Tools may be simple (such as large-handled spoons) or sophisticated (such as digital communicators for a child who lacks speech).
- Spring-action scissors, wide paintbrushes, and anchors for papers can make a world of difference during art and writing activities.
- A wide array of cooking tools can be provided for programming that appeals to all age groups.
- Ergonomic gardening tools and modified containers, such as raised beds or wheeled containers, can accommodate gardeners of all abilities.
- Communication tools can help enhance relationships. Devices and apps are becoming more common for adults who are losing their speaking ability due to debilitating conditions. For example, Boardmaker Software (www.mayer-johnson.com/boardmaker-software/) is a communications tool with more than 3,000 pictures.

Best Practices for Intergenerational Programming

1. Staff members of the adult and child programs collaborate to plan activities.
2. Participants are involved in decision-making about the activity and during activities.
3. Participation is voluntary.
4. Participants are prepared ahead of time and reflect on the activity afterward.
5. Activities reflect interests, backgrounds, and social histories of program participants.
6. Activities are age- and role-appropriate.
7. Activities support interaction among intergenerational participants.
8. Facilitators skillfully stage the environment to promote interaction.
9. Facilitators consider the social environment and the role of staff members.
10. Adaptive equipment is used as appropriate.
11. Facilitators document and communicate experiences to build on in future activities.

Additional Resources


References