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Teens Learn to Care about Dementia

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Link Generations
June 26, 2025

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will review training for high school students focused on communicating with people living with dementia.
- Participants will engage in intergenerational activities that have been used with adults and high school students in adult memory care programs.
- Participants will consider methods used to evaluate outcomes of high school students and older adult participants.

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Mission of Link Generations

- To educate middle and high school aged youth about aging and connect them with older adults in interactive activities that benefit both populations.
- The mission is to combat ageism and social isolation.
- Youth are trained about aging and effectively communicating with older adults. They learn about history from those who have lived through it.
- Adult participants feel a sense of purpose, connection to others, and increased understanding of today's youth.

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Added Training: Communicating with People Living with Dementia

- 1/3 of people over age 85 have Alzheimer's Disease
- Cases of dementia are increasing globally due to longer life expectancy
- As this trend continues, more and more people will come into contact with people with dementia
- Memory care facilities have reached out to Link Generations to connect youth with their residents
- Developed and piloted a new training module in a memory care day program.

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Training High School Students

- Introduction to Gerontology
- Stereotypes of Aging
- Basic Facts about Dementia
- Memory Loss Scenarios
- What to Expect during Conversations
- Role Playing

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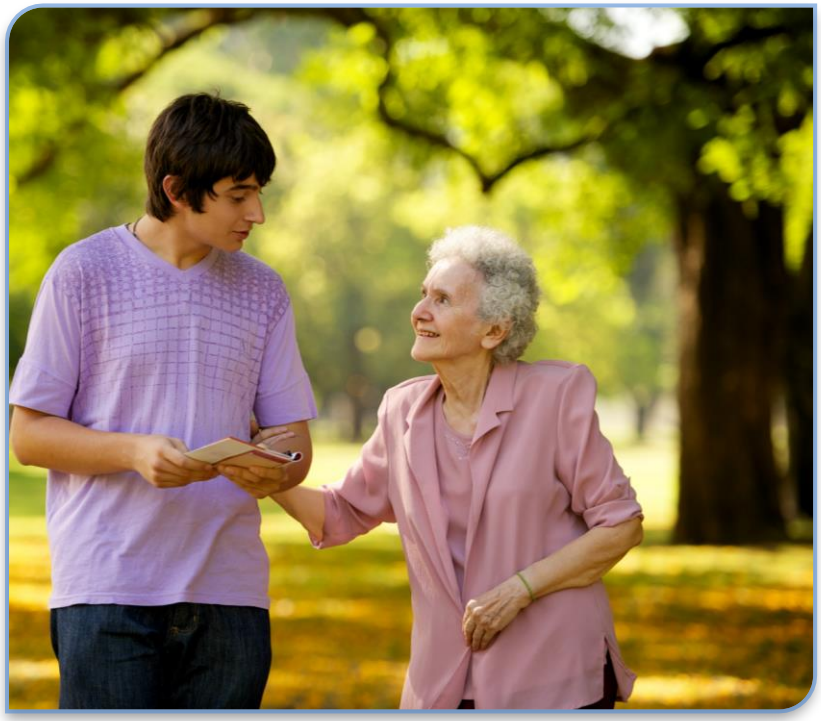
Interacting with Older Adults with Memory Loss

- Focus on being in the moment.
- Don’t exclude the person from conversations.
- Give the person time to respond. Don’t interrupt unless help is requested.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Make eye contact.
- Be patient. Avoid patronizing them or ridiculing what they say.



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Making Connections in the Moment

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Engaging Intergenerational Activities

- Arrange small table groupings
- Introduce tested theme
- Provide questions to facilitate conversations
- Include hands-on activity
- Lead summary discussion from each table
- Conclude with lessons learned

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Program in Action

- Today's theme: Gratitude
- Questions to facilitate conversations:
  - What are some things in your life you are grateful for?
  - What do you appreciate about those things?
  - Who are the people in your life you are thankful for?
- Hands-on activity: using the thank you cards provided, list 5 things your table is thankful for
- Lessons learned: each table has a chance to share what they are thankful for

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Evaluation Methods – Youth

- Surveys for high school students
  - Retrospective post-test surveys
  - All reported feeling more comfortable with older adults and people living with dementia
  - Most (88%) reported learning something new about dementia

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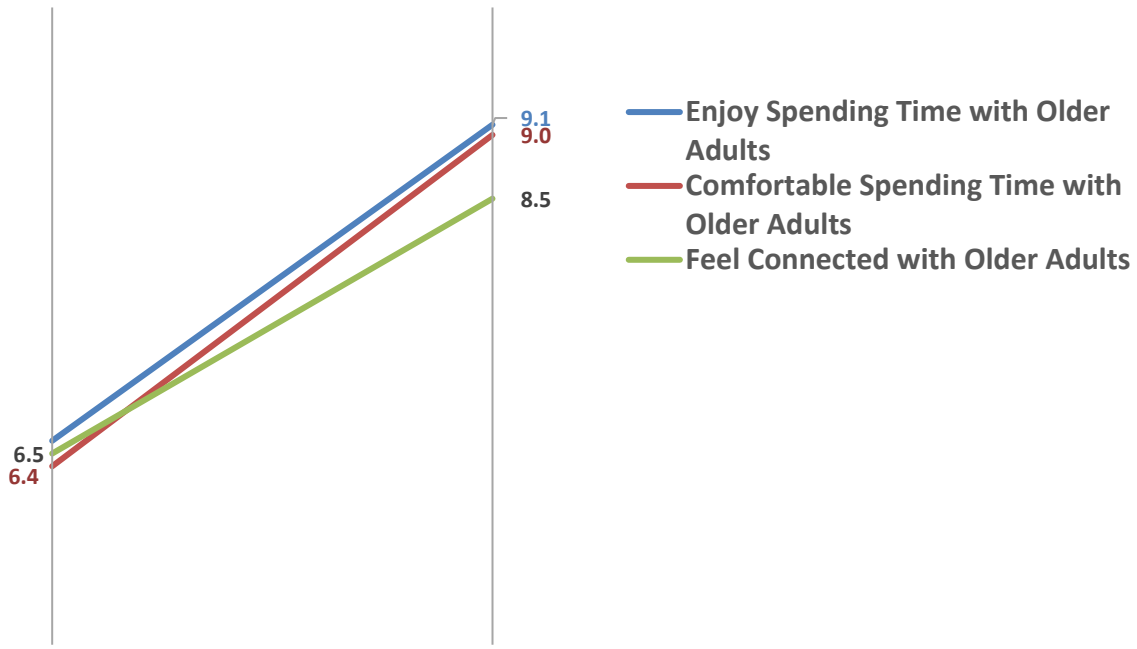
Students Increased Feelings of Enjoyment, Comfort, and Connection with Older Adults



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Lifelong Lessons – What Youth Said

- *"I learned about disruptions with language, memory loss, attention, recognition, problem solving, and decision making. But that doesn't change anything! People living with dementia are the same as the rest of us."* – youth participant
- *"People living with dementia still have strong identities and experiences that give the younger generation a glimpse of what life was like many decades ago."* – youth participant

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More Lifelong Lessons

- *"I learned to be patient and understanding."* – youth participant
- *"My perspective has changed. I have realized that conversations are much more enjoyable than how some people claim."* – youth participant
- *"I had this notion that people with dementia had similar characteristics but I could not have been more wrong. The people I met showed me how they are all so different even though they have all been diagnosed with dementia."* – youth participant

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Evaluation Methods – Older Adults

- Surveys for older adults and memory care staff
  - *"I liked the opportunity to talk with students, to hear what's new. We learn from each other."* – older participant
  - *"Being with them made me feel younger."* – older participant

- Observation checklist in development
  - Asks students to look for interactive behaviors
  - Tool seems to help students be more engaged during the program

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Observation Checklist Pilot Results

- *"Even though she was nonverbal, she smiled.*
- *Subsequent meeting: "She actually spoke and was happy."*
- *"She also sang along to happy birthday and clapped."*

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More Checklist Pilot Results

- *"Evelyn looked at me and said that it was the best thing that ever happened to her."*
- *"She asked for us to promise to come back."*

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Questions

- Thank you for joining the discussion today!
- Contact Information:

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