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Ageing Well

WP3/ A1- Activity 2

Module A: Awareness of age discrimination/stereotypes

INFODEF

Lesson Plan 4: Empathy and Understanding towards the
elderly





Overview of the module

This module introduces the concept of age discrimination and stereotypes, focusing on how they negatively impact older adults in various settings. It raises awareness of both overt and covert signs of ageism and provides strategies for recognizing and addressing these biases to foster more inclusive and respectful interactions with the elderly.

Objectives

1. Define age discrimination and age-related stereotypes.
2. Identify both overt and covert signs of age discrimination in various contexts.
3. Understand the negative effects of ageism on older adults' mental health and well-being.
4. Recognize common age-related stereotypes and challenge them with facts.
5. Develop strategies to prevent and address age discrimination in personal and professional interactions with older adults.
6. Foster a more inclusive and respectful attitude toward ageing in their communities and workplaces.

Lesson Plan Title: Empathy and Understanding towards the elderly

Objective:

To develop empathy and understanding towards the elderly.

Duration: 60 minutes in total (including all activities)

Activities:

- o Activity 1: Video on Empathy and Understanding Towards the Elderly (15 minutes)
- o Activity 2: Role-Playing - Small Group Activity - Empathy Exercises (15 minutes)
- o Activity 3: Role-Play - Practicing Empathy and Understanding (20 minutes)



- o Activity 4: Individual Reflection - Reflection on Empathy in Role-Play (10 minutes)

Materials needed:

- o **Activity 1:**

- ✓ A video on empathy and understanding towards the elderly (pre-selected).

<https://youtu.be/f0wVC9BoiEw?si=2j7XV-K-QCf9nOwC>

<https://youtu.be/DXZZcdFXTtY?si=k4ELGQshuG-ulscN>

- ✓ Projector or screen for viewing.

- o **Activity 2:**

- ✓ Blindfolds, earplugs, or other props to simulate age-related physical challenges.

- o **Activity 3:**

- ✓ [Pre-written role-play scenarios.](#)

- o **Activity 4:**

- ✓ [Reflection worksheets or journals.](#)

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- o Understand Empathy and its Impact on Elderly Well-Being
- o Reflect on Age-Related Challenges
- o Practice Empathy by Adopting the Perspective of Older Adults
- o Demonstrate Compassionate Interaction with the Elderly
- o Apply Empathy in Social and Caregiving Situations
- o Respond to Emotional and Physical Needs with Compassion
- o Develop Respectful and Understanding Communication Skills
- o Create a Personal Plan for Improving Interactions with Elderly Individuals



List of sources and references related to the activity (APA style):

Carter, M. (2020). Visualizing Empathy: The Role of Infographics in Gerontology Education. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 33(4), 101-112.

Choi, M. (2020). Empathy and the Elderly: Visualizing Intergenerational Understanding. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 35(2), 105-112.

Davis, K. (2019). Experiencing Aging: Simulating Physical Limitations to Foster Empathy. *Social Gerontology Review*, 12(3), 80-89.

Johnson, L. (2018). Reflective Practices for Empathy Development in Aging Studies. *Gerontology and Geriatrics Education*, 39(2), 97-104.

Smith, J. (2021). Role-Playing for Empathy: Teaching Compassionate Communication in Gerontology. *Journal of Intergenerational Studies*, 29(1), 55-72.



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Activity 1: Video on Empathy and Understanding Towards the Elderly



Title of the activity: Video on Empathy and Understanding Towards the Elderly

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity (up to 150 words):

This activity introduces participants to the concepts of empathy and understanding through a visual medium. The video provides real-life examples of how these qualities can positively impact the lives of elderly individuals. By visually seeing the challenges faced by the elderly, participants can better grasp the emotional and social implications of age-related issues, setting the foundation for the rest of the lesson.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Introduce the concept of empathy and its role in improving interactions with the elderly.
- o Understand how empathy can positively affect elderly individuals' emotional well-being.
- o Facilitate reflection on how age-related challenges are experienced by older adults.

Materials Needed:

- o A video on empathy and understanding towards the elderly (pre-selected).
<https://youtu.be/f0wVC9BoiEw?si=2j7XV-K-QCf9nOwC>
<https://youtu.be/DXZZcdFXTtY?si=k4ELGQshuG-ulscN>
- o Projector or screen for viewing.

Duration of the activity:

15 minutes

Description of the process of the activity:

In this opening activity, participants engage with a 5-7 minute video that highlights the



importance of empathy in interactions with the elderly. The video showcases personal stories and examples illustrating the emotional and social challenges faced by older adults, allowing participants to visually connect with the realities of ageism. After watching, a guided discussion encourages participants to reflect on the emotional or social obstacles highlighted in the video and consider how empathy can positively influence the well-being of elderly individuals. This collective reflection sets the stage for deeper exploration of empathy and its significance in fostering understanding towards the elderly throughout the lesson.

- o Step 1. Play a 5-7 minute video that highlights personal stories or examples of empathy in action when dealing with elderly individuals.
- o Step 2. After the video, facilitate a discussion using the following questions:
 - o What emotional or social challenges were highlighted?
 - o How did empathy make a difference in the video scenarios?
 - o What can we learn from these stories about improving our own interactions with elderly individuals?

Variations of the activity, if any:

- o Instead of one video, you can play multiple short clips focusing on different aspects of empathy towards the elderly (e.g., caregiving, everyday interactions).

Tips and recommendations:

- o Choose a video that evokes emotional connections, helping participants relate to the experiences of the elderly.

List of sources and references related to the activity (APA style):

Choi, M. (2020). Empathy and the Elderly: Visualizing Intergenerational Understanding. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 35(2), 105-112.



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Activity 2: Empathy Exercises

Small Group Exercises



Title of the activity: Small Group Activity - Empathy Exercises

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity (up to 150 words):

Empathy is a skill that can be developed through experiential learning. In small groups, participants engage in exercises that encourage them to understand and experience the world from an elderly person's perspective. This exercise helps develop greater emotional awareness and practical understanding of the needs and challenges of elderly individuals.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Practice empathy by placing oneself in the shoes of an elderly person.
- o Understand how physical limitations and social isolation affect older adults.
- o Develop greater awareness of how to interact compassionately with elderly individuals.

Materials Needed:

- o Blindfolds, earplugs, or other props to simulate age-related physical challenges.

Duration of the activity:

15 minutes

Description of the process of the activity:

This hands-on activity enables participants to practice empathy by simulating age-related physical challenges. Working in small groups, participants use props such as blindfolds or earplugs to mimic the experiences of elderly individuals facing mobility, vision, or hearing limitations. By attempting to complete everyday tasks while navigating these challenges, participants gain firsthand insight into the difficulties older adults may encounter. Afterward, groups come together to discuss their feelings during the simulation and share



how the experience shifted their perspective on the needs of the elderly. This immersive exercise enhances emotional awareness and fosters a greater understanding of compassionate interactions with older individuals.

- o Step 1. Divide participants into small groups.
- o Step 2. Assign empathy exercises that simulate common age-related challenges (e.g., reduced mobility, hearing loss, or vision impairment). For example, participants may use blindfolds to simulate vision impairment or earplugs for hearing loss.
- o Step 3. Ask participants to complete everyday tasks while using these props. Below are some examples of tasks / challenges

- o *Navigating a Room with Vision Impairment*

- Task: While wearing a blindfold, participants navigate a familiar room, locate a chair, and sit down safely.

- o *Completing a Simple Puzzle with Reduced Dexterity*

- Task: While wearing gloves or finger splints to simulate reduced dexterity, participants complete a simple puzzle or button a shirt.

- o *Listening and Following Instructions with Hearing Loss*

- Task: While wearing earplugs, participants listen to instructions or a short conversation and try to respond accurately.

- o *Carrying Groceries with Mobility Challenges*

- Task: Participants use a walker or simulate limited mobility while carrying a lightweight grocery bag from one point to another.

- o *Reading Fine Print with Blurred Vision*

- Task: Using glasses or plastic wrap to blur their vision, participants try to read small print on a document, such as a medication label or menu.



- o Step 4. After the exercise, ask each group to discuss how it felt to experience these limitations and how it changed their perspective on the challenges faced by elderly individuals.
- o Step 5. Groups should share their insights with the whole class.

Variations of the activity, if any:

- o If time allows, participants can rotate through different empathy exercises to experience various challenges.

Tips and recommendations:

- o Ensure participants approach the activity with respect and understanding, avoiding humor or trivializing the experience.

List of sources and references related to the activity (APA style):

Davis, K. (2019). Experiencing Aging: Simulating Physical Limitations to Foster Empathy. *Social Gerontology Review*, 12(3), 80-89.



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Activity 3: Practicing Empathy and Understanding

Role-Play - Small Group Exercises



Title of the activity: Role-Play - Practicing Empathy and Understanding

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity (up to 150 words):

Role-playing helps participants actively engage with scenarios that require empathy when interacting with elderly individuals. This experiential activity allows participants to practice compassionate communication, patience, and understanding in real-life scenarios.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Practice applying empathy in various social and caregiving situations involving the elderly.
- o Learn how to respond to emotional or physical needs in a compassionate manner.
- o Develop communication skills that show respect and understanding.

Materials Needed:

- o [Pre-written role-play scenarios.](#)

Duration of the activity:

20 minutes

Description of the process of the activity:

In this experiential role-playing activity, participants take on scenarios that require them to demonstrate empathy and understanding in various interactions with elderly individuals. Divided into pairs, participants receive pre-written scenarios that depict situations where compassion and patience are essential, such as assisting an elderly person with daily tasks or addressing their emotional needs. By acting out these scenarios, participants practice applying empathetic responses, enhancing their communication skills. After each role-play, a group discussion facilitates reflection on the impact of empathy in the scenarios and



identifies effective strategies for compassionate engagement. This activity allows participants to actively explore and refine their empathetic communication skills in realistic contexts.

- o Step 1. Divide participants into pairs or small groups and provide them with role-play scenarios where empathy and understanding are needed (e.g., helping an elderly person with a task, addressing age-related frustrations, or dealing with emotional needs).
- o Step 2. Each pair acts out the scenario, focusing on showing empathy in their responses and actions.
- o Step 3. Ask pairs to reverse the roles and act out the scenario.
- o Step 4. After each role-play, discuss as a group:
 - o How did showing empathy affect the outcome of the scenario?
 - o What strategies worked best for demonstrating understanding and compassion?

Variations of the activity, if any:

- o Scenarios can be tailored to different cultural or social contexts to explore empathy in diverse environments.



Tips and recommendations:

- o Encourage participants to focus on listening skills and non-verbal communication during the role-play.

Listening Skills

- Active Listening

Example: Nod or say “I understand” at intervals to show that you are engaged and following along. This reassures the speaker and encourages them to continue sharing.

- Paraphrasing for Clarity

Example: After the elderly individual finishes sharing, repeat back what you understood in your own words. For instance, “So, what you’re saying is...” This shows that you’ve understood and helps clarify any potential miscommunication.

- Asking Open-Ended Questions

Example: Use questions like, “Can you tell me more about that?” instead of yes-or-no questions. This invites the person to share more, demonstrating that you value their perspective.

- Avoiding Interruptions

Example: Resist the urge to finish sentences or interject. Instead, wait until they finish speaking before responding, showing respect and patience.

Non-Verbal Communication

- Maintaining Eye Contact

Example: Make consistent but gentle eye contact, which shows attentiveness and helps build trust. Avoid staring, as it may feel intimidating; instead, use warm, relaxed eye contact.

- Using Open Body Language

Example: Sit facing the person with relaxed shoulders and hands visible. Avoid crossing arms or looking away frequently, as this can convey disinterest or impatience.

- Offering a Warm, Genuine Smile



Example: Smile naturally to convey friendliness and empathy. A genuine smile can help put the other person at ease and encourage open communication.

Mirroring Posture

Example: Subtly mimic the other person's posture, gestures, or expressions. If they are sitting with their hands resting on their lap, you can do the same. This can create a sense of rapport and comfort without being overly noticeable.

- Using Gentle, Reassuring Touch (if appropriate)

Example: A light touch on the hand or shoulder, if the person seems comfortable with it, can offer reassurance and show empathy, especially in moments of emotional sharing.

List of sources and references related to the activity (APA style):

Smith, J. (2021). Role-Playing for Empathy: Teaching Compassionate Communication in Gerontology. *Journal of Intergenerational Studies*, 29(1), 55-72.



Lesson 4 - Activity 3. Role-Play Scenarios

Scenario 1: The Lonely Neighbor

- **Context:** A young adult visits an elderly neighbor who lives alone. The neighbor has been feeling isolated and is hesitant to open up about their feelings.
- **Roles:**
 - Elderly Neighbor: Initially reserved and reluctant to share their feelings.
 - Young Adult: Approaches the neighbor with kindness and curiosity, trying to engage them in conversation.
- **Prompts:**

Elderly Neighbor (Initially Reserved):

- "Oh, it's nice of you to stop by. I don't get many visitors these days."
- "Thank you for asking, but I'm fine, really. I've just been... keeping to myself."
- "I guess it's been a bit quiet around here. Sometimes it feels like time just drags on, you know?"

Young Adult (Kind and Curious):

- "Hi, I thought I'd come over and see how you're doing. I know it can get pretty quiet around here."
- "What do you usually enjoy doing? I'd love to hear about your hobbies or things you like to do around the house."
- "I really enjoy hearing about your experiences. It must have been interesting when you were my age—what was that like?"

- **Objectives:**
 - The young adult practices active listening and asks open-ended questions to encourage the neighbor to share their thoughts.



- o The elderly neighbor gradually opens up about their feelings of loneliness and appreciates the visit.



Scenario 2: Family Visit

- **Context:** During a family visit, an elderly grandparent shares stories from their youth. Younger family members are distracted by their phones and don't seem interested in listening.
- **Roles:**
 - Elderly Grandparent: Enthusiastic about sharing memories and seeking connection.
 - Younger Family Members: Initially distracted and disengaged but gradually realize the importance of the grandparent's stories.
- **Prompts:**

Elderly Grandparent (Enthusiastic about Sharing Memories):

- "This reminds me of when I was young. We didn't have phones like yours—we spent a lot of time together as a family."
- "Oh, let me tell you about the summer of '65; it was such a memorable time."
- "I love sharing these stories. It brings back so many memories and makes me feel connected to you all."

Younger Family Members (Initially Distracted, Gradually Engaging):

- "Oh, sorry, Grandpa, what were you saying? I got distracted for a moment."
- "Can you tell us more about that summer? It sounds like it was important to you."
- "Wow, I didn't know that happened back then! What was it like to grow up during that time?"

- **Objectives:**
 - The younger family members practice putting away their devices and actively engaging in conversation.
 - The elderly grandparent feels valued and appreciated for their life experiences.



Scenario 3: Assisting with Technology

- **Context:** An elderly individual is struggling to use a smartphone and feels frustrated. A younger person offers to help but initially approaches it with impatience.
- **Roles:**
 - Elderly Individual: Expresses frustration and anxiety about using technology.
 - Younger Person: Must learn to adjust their approach and demonstrate empathy.
- **Prompts:**

Elderly Individual (Frustrated with Technology):

- "I just don't understand how this thing works. Every time I try, something goes wrong."
- "It makes me feel so silly not being able to figure it out. Maybe I'm just too old for this."
- "Thank you for helping. I know I'm not easy to teach when it comes to these new gadgets."

Younger Person (Initially Impatient, Becoming Empathetic):

- "I get that this can be frustrating. It took me a while to get used to it too—let's take it step by step."
- "Would it help if I showed you slowly? Then you can try it yourself after we go through it together."
- "No problem, I'm here to help. Let's just take our time with it."

- **Objectives:**
 - The younger person practices patience and explains things in a clear, supportive manner.
 - The elderly individual feels encouraged and gains confidence in using the technology.



Scenario 4: Healthcare Encounter

- **Context:** An elderly patient visits a doctor for a check-up but feels rushed and overlooked during the appointment. They struggle to express their concerns.
- **Roles:**
 - Elderly Patient: Attempts to communicate health issues but feels anxious and unheard.
 - Doctor: Initially hurried but must learn to slow down and actively listen.
- **Prompts:**

Elderly Patient (Anxious, Feeling Overlooked):

- "Doctor, I've been feeling this pain for a while now, but I can't explain it very well."
- "I sometimes feel like I'm being rushed through these appointments. I just want to make sure I'm heard."
- "Thank you for listening. It helps to know I can ask questions and not feel like I'm wasting your time."

Doctor (Initially Hurried, Transitioning to Active Listening):

- "I apologize if it feels rushed; your concerns are important. Can you tell me more about the pain?"
- "Let's take our time here. What symptoms are you experiencing, and when did they start?"
- "Thank you for sharing that. I want to make sure we address all your concerns today."

- **Objectives:**
 - The doctor practices empathy by slowing down the conversation and asking specific questions to understand the patient's concerns.
 - The elderly patient feels more comfortable expressing their needs and feels validated.



Scenario 5: Community Activity

- **Context:** A local community center is hosting an activity, and younger participants dismiss the ideas of older adults who wish to contribute, assuming their suggestions are outdated.
- **Roles:**
 - Older Adult: Tries to share ideas for the activity and feels disheartened by the dismissive attitude.
 - Younger Participants: Initially resistant but must learn to appreciate the contributions of older adults.
- **Prompts:**

Older Adult (Disheartened but Confidently Sharing Ideas)

- "I've seen some successful events that included everyone in a meaningful way. Perhaps we could try something similar?"
- "It feels good to contribute, and I think some of my experiences could bring new perspectives to our activity."
- "Thank you for listening to my ideas. It's great to be part of a team that values everyone's input."

Younger Participants (Initially Resistant, Learning to Value Older Adult's Input)

- "I'm curious, could you explain more about the events you've been involved in? Maybe there's something we could use."
- "That's a great suggestion; I hadn't thought about that approach. How did you manage that in the past?"
- "Thank you for sharing your ideas with us! It's helpful to get different perspectives."

- **Objectives:**
 - The older adult practices confidence in sharing their ideas.
 - The younger participants practice empathy by actively listening and valuing the older adult's experiences, leading to a collaborative discussion.



Group Activity Objectives:

- Each group will perform the role-play scenario, focusing on practicing empathy and understanding.
- After the role-plays, participants can discuss how empathy played a role in each scenario and reflect on what strategies were effective in fostering understanding and connection between generations.



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Activity 4: Reflection on Empathy

Individual Reflection



Title of the activity: Individual Reflection - Reflection on Empathy in Role-Play

Short description of the theoretical context of the activity (up to 150 words):

Reflection is a critical component of experiential learning. By taking time to reflect on their experiences in the role-play, participants can deepen their understanding of empathy, analyze their emotional responses, and think about how they can apply these skills in real-life interactions with the elderly.

Aims and objectives of the activity:

- o Reflect on the emotional and social aspects of showing empathy.
- o Identify personal strengths and areas for improvement in demonstrating empathy towards the elderly.
- o Create a personal plan for improving interactions with elderly individuals.

Materials Needed:

- o [Reflection worksheets or journals.](#)

Duration of the activity:

10 minutes

Description of the process of the activity:

Concluding the lesson, participants engage in individual reflection to process their experiences from the role-play activity. Using reflection worksheets or journals, participants are prompted to consider the emotions they felt during the role-play, the challenges they faced in demonstrating empathy, and the insights they gained about their own capacities for compassion. Each participant is encouraged to identify personal strengths and areas for growth, culminating in the creation of a brief personal plan



detailing how they intend to enhance their empathetic interactions with elderly individuals in both personal and professional settings. This reflective practice reinforces the importance of self-awareness and commitment to fostering understanding towards the elderly.

- o Step 1. Ask participants to individually reflect on their experience in the role-play.
 - o What emotions did they feel during the role-play?
 - o How easy or difficult was it to show empathy?
 - o What did they learn about themselves through this activity?
- o Step 2. Participants write down their thoughts and create a brief personal plan for how they can apply empathy and understanding in their interactions with elderly individuals in their personal or professional lives?

Variations of the activity, if any:

- o Participants can share their reflections with a partner or small group if time allows.

Tips and recommendations:

- o Encourage honesty and self-awareness in the reflection process.

List of sources and references related to the activity (APA style):

Johnson, L. (2018). Reflective Practices for Empathy Development in Aging Studies. *Gerontology and Geriatrics Education*, 39(2), 97-104.



Lesson 4 - Activity 4. Reflection Worksheet

Reflection Worksheet: Reflection on Empathy in Role-Play

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 1: Role-Play Experience

1. Describe the scenario you participated in:

- o *What was the context of the role-play? Briefly summarize the situation and your role.*

2. What emotions did you experience during the role-play?

- o *Reflect on your feelings as you enacted your role and interacted with others.*

Part 2: Understanding Empathy

3. How did the role-play help you understand the challenges faced by older adults?

- o *Reflect on any insights you gained about the experiences of elderly individuals.*



4. **What empathy strategies did you observe or use during the role-play?**

- o *Identify specific actions or phrases that demonstrated empathy.*
-
-
-

Part 3: Personal Reflection

5. **How did you feel about your ability to empathize with the elderly individual in your role?**

- o *Do you feel you were able to understand their perspective? Why or why not?*
-
-

6. **What challenges did you face in expressing empathy during the role-play?**

- o *Were there moments when you found it difficult to connect or understand?*
-
-
-

Part 4: Moving Forward

7. **How can you apply what you learned about empathy in your daily life?**

- o *Consider ways you can practice empathy with older adults in your community or family.*
-



8. Set a personal goal:

- *What is one specific action you will take to enhance your empathy towards older adults moving forward?*

Conclusion

- *After completing this worksheet, take a moment to review your responses. Consider discussing your reflections with a partner or small group to share insights and foster a deeper understanding of empathy towards the elderly.*

This reflection worksheet encourages participants to engage deeply with their experiences during the role-play, fostering personal growth and enhancing their ability to empathize with older adults. Participants can use this worksheet as a tool for self-reflection and discussion.



General Tips:

- Create a supportive and respectful environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their reflections.
- Use diverse materials (video, role-play, infographic) to cater to different learning styles.
- Encourage participants to think about how they can continue developing empathy beyond the lesson.

References (APA Style):

- Carter, M. (2020). Visualizing Empathy: The Role of Infographics in Gerontology Education. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 33(4), 101-112.
- Choi, M. (2020). Empathy and the Elderly: Visualizing Intergenerational Understanding. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 35(2), 105-112.
- Davis, K. (2019). Experiencing Aging: Simulating Physical Limitations to Foster Empathy. *Social Gerontology Review*, 12(3), 80-89.
- Johnson, L. (2018). Reflective Practices for Empathy Development in Aging Studies. *Gerontology and Geriatrics Education*, 39(2), 97-104.
- Smith, J. (2021). Role-Playing for Empathy: Teaching Compassionate Communication in Gerontology. *Journal of Intergenerational Studies*, 29(1), 55-72.