STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING: A HOLISTIC AND COMMUNITY BASED WELLNESS PILOT PROGRAM

By

anna o’gorman

A Project Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

Committee Membership

Yvonne Doble, MSW, Advisor

Dr. Jayne McGuire, Second Reader

Myriah Busch, Community Partner

Maria Moua, Community Partner

Geneva Shaw, MSW, Program Graduate Coordinator

May 2016
ABSTRACT

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING: A HOLISTIC AND COMMUNITY BASED WELLNESS PILOT PROGRAM

anna o’gorman

With a quickly increasing global aging trend, communities are working to modify and increase programming to meet the needs of our aging population. Aging is often viewed through deficiency based models that focus on decline and loss of function. The lens of deficiency can impact program development and delivery. Social workers and health care professions are striving to provide strength-based innovative practices and policies that support the holistic needs of our aging population. The goal of this project was to develop and implement a wellness program that explores resiliency factors in the aging process. Using a strength based theoretical framework of successful aging, the curriculum incorporated mindfulness, breath centered movement, and social engagement with peers. The program was piloted at a rural northern California Senior Resource Center. The curriculum was refined through feedback and reflection of the implementation, with the development of a manual for further facilitation of this course material. An employee of the senior resource center was present at all six weeks to develop an understanding of the material to offer in the class in the future and support sustainability. Sharing the manual with other local senior resource programs was an area identified for future implementation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was a labor of love fueled by so many folks. I’m thankful for the support of the Humboldt Senior Resource Center; Joanne, Maria and Myriah, as well as Ann and all the participants, for your commitment and engagement. I’m also grateful for the support of Yvonne, Jayne and the encouragement from all my cohort members. Thank you to my family, friends and lunadog for your support and unconditional love. “Your love, lifting me higher than I’ve ever been lifted before” (Jackson and Smith. 1967).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Perspective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Aging</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Design Process</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Process</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Design and Materials</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Evaluation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Implementation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Week One Goals & Activities ................................................................. 12
Table 2: Week Two Goals & Activities ................................................................. 13
Table 3: Week Three Goals & Activities ............................................................ 14
Table 4: Week Four Goals & Activities ............................................................... 15
Table 5: Week Five Goals & Activities ............................................................... 16
Table 6: Week Six Goals & Activities ................................................................. 17
Table 7: Weekly Participants & Returning Participants ................................. 18
Table 8: Week One Survey Results ................................................................. 19
Table 9: Week Two Survey Results ................................................................. 19
Table 10: Week Three Survey Results ............................................................... 20
Table 11: Week Four Survey Results ................................................................. 21
Table 12: Week Five Survey Results ................................................................. 21
Table 13: Week Six Survey Results ................................................................. 22
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Strategies for Successful Aging Recruitment Flyer .......................... 36
Appendix B: Strategies for Successful Aging Participation Consent Form .......... 37
Appendix C: Successful Strategies for Aging Survey ........................................... 38
Appendix D: Strategies for Successful Aging Manual ....................................... 39
INTRODUCTION

Aging adults are the fastest growing demographic in the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), people over sixty, defined as older people in the World Ageing Population 2013 report, have tripled from 202 million in 1950 to 841 million in 2013. This group is expected to continually increase at a fast rate, with the population forecasted to triple to 1.6 billion by 2050 (WHO, 2013, p. 25). In the United States the graying of America impacts individuals as they age, as well as their families and communities. The US Census Bureau estimates people living over sixty-five will increase by over 135% from 2000 to 2050, with the population of people living over eighty to increase 350% from 2000 to 2050, making an estimated 83.5 million people over sixty-five living in the United States by 2050 (2013, p. 2). With an increase in the global aging population, there are emerging conversations seeking solutions on how to best support elders.

The Area 1 on Agency on Aging published, Gray Matters: Getting Humboldt on Track for an Aging Population (2011), which examined how the global aging trend impacts Humboldt and Del Norte counties. According to Grey Matters, in 2001 18.3% of Humboldt County’s population was over sixty-five, and it is estimated to double by 2050 (p. 9, 2011). The aging population affects communities socially, economically, and politically, which provides social workers and health care professionals an opportunity to provide innovative practices and policies which support the holistic needs of our aging population. Often, programing for elders is framed through a deficiency model, with the
focus on decline and disability. A strength based perspective allows for the acknowledgement of the losses while simultaneously honoring the unique joys, such as wisdom or a deepened sense of self. The goal of the master’s project was to create and implement a strengths based curriculum that focused on protective factors to support the needs of Humboldt’s aging population.

Personal Perspective

This project was informed by the literature, as well as my ten years of teaching movement and mindfulness. My own yoga and meditation practice has been beneficial in navigating medical challenges throughout my life. My intention in offering movement and mindfulness practices is to empower individuals and communities to feel a strong sense of autonomy over their bodies and health. Through the curriculum development and implementation process, I sought to translate previously used skills with aging adults, using current peer-reviewed literature.
The literature review section will explore the main aspects which guided this project, including ageism, successful aging, mindfulness and movement.

Ageism

Perceptions of aging have the ability to impact the creation of policies and the implementation of programming for older adults. According to Angus and Reeve (2006), older adults are viewed as unproductive and dependent (p. 137). The authors argue that ageism views all elders as a homogenous group and does not allow for the multidimensional experiences of older adults. There is no single aging experience and many factors influence the aging process. Angus and Reeves (2006) equate ageism to other experiences of oppression. The researchers define ageism, “as a process of systematically stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old” (p. 139).

Like other forms of oppression, Angus and Reeves (2006) examine how ageism negatively impacts individuals, as well as informing organizational practices and the creation of public policy (p. 139). In Empowering Elderly People: A Community Work Approach, author Kam (1996) also explores how, historically, services for older adults were aimed at providing services that disempowered older adults, with service providers treating elders as passive participants in their own process. This type of service delivery creates a feeling of powerlessness and exacerbates a feeling of incompetence and a lack
of autonomy (p. 230). Kam (1996) argues older adults need to be encouraged to participate in their service delivery and service providers need to engage in self-reflection to understand how their perceptions on aging impact their practices (p. 238). In order to disrupt dominant narratives which view aging as negative, Angus and Reeves (2006) postulate self-reflection focused around ideas of ageism is necessary, as well as including older adults in the creation of practices, programming, and policies that will be most supportive (p. 150, 2006).

Successful Aging

In 1987 Rowe and Kahn created a framework of successful aging. Crowther, Parker, Achenbaum, Larimore and Koenig (2002), this theory examines interventions based on reducing risk for disease or disability, engaging in activities which promote physical and cognitive health, and cultivating a sense of control over one’s life and the capacity to meet challenges of aging. Since 1987 other researchers have contributed to this theory of successful aging. Strout and Howard (2012) built on the model of successful aging integrating six distinct dimensions of well-being. These dimensions include self acceptance, personal development, life purpose, positive relationships with others, a sense of control of one’s environment an experiences. and a sense of self-determination autonomy. Turner (2003) defines successful aging as the ability to adapt and accept the changes and challenges that come with aging (p. 156). Crowther et. al. argue the Rowe and Kahn model does not incorporate total wellness and the spiritual
dimension of aging needs to be explored as well, coining the term positive spirituality. Crowther et. al. assert that although health promotion interventions are often cautious to include spirituality as an aspect to health, it can be done with skill by differentiating between religion and spirituality. With a focus on the commonalities among different religions and life affirmation aspects of spirituality. Positive spirituality involves the deepening of one’s personal relationship with higher power and connection to something larger than self (2002, p. 614). Crowther et. al. assert positive spirituality as a coping skill that can mediate many experiences of aging, including increasing meaning and purpose in one’s life, as well as strengthening a sense of control over one’s life experiences and reducing the stress of loss and grief (p. 617, 2002). Positive aging is a framework that incorporates strength-based perspectives of aging, acknowledging the differences of aging experiences and exploring resiliency factors of aging

Mindfulness

Mindfulness attained a level of acceptance in the western medical community due to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (Turner, 2013, p. 157). Mindfulness has been used to support many populations, and is starting to gain interest with health providers working with aging adults. There are limited studies that examine the efficacy of mindfulness in supporting older adults. Mindfulness Skills Training: A Pilot Study of Changes in Mindfulness, Emotional Regulation and Self Perception of Aging in Older Adults, a study by Turner (2013) found that mindfulness
strengthened the participants’ emotional regulation, as well as increasing awareness around habitual behaviors, promoting changing these patterns (p. 163). However, this study was not statically significant.

Another study, *Towards Identifying the Effects of the Specific Components of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on Biologic and Emotional Outcomes Among Older Adults*, Gallegos, Hoerger, Talbot, Krasner, and Knight (2013) from Rochester Medical Center, studied the impacts of mindfulness on immune function, insulin levels, and positive affects with older adults. The study found that the use of mindfulness, through seated exercise and yoga poses, provided many health benefits, which included reducing blood pressure and balancing respiration and heart rate (2013). The study also found mindfulness enhanced cognitive function, by focusing one’s attention and emphasizing non-judgmental attitudes during challenging experiences (2013, p. 791). Nilsson, Bülow, and Kazemi, (2015) also suggest that mindfulness practices increase one’s sense of self compassion, adding in the acceptance of changes in the aging process (p 500).

Mindfulness can be practiced using a variety of methods. Turner (2013) this can include silence seated practices, movement or yoga poses, as well as using the lens of mindfulness with everyday activities such as eating, walking or gardening. Movement and physical activity, Nilsson, Bülow, and Kazemi (2015) have been shown to support aging adults in being healthier mentally and physically with an increase in strength and energy.
METHODOLOGY

This project was presented at the Adult Day Health and Alzheimer’s Service Program (ADH and AS). Participants included elders with varying levels of cognition, physical ability, and mobility. The six-week curriculum was developed to be taken independently or as a series. Classes were on Thursdays, which limited the participation to people present on that specific day. After each class the participants were presented with a consent form to participate in a five-minute survey regarding the possible benefits of the class content in regards to mind, body, and spiritual wellness. Additionally, the researcher made use of inductive content analysis of the survey results. This method factored into the implementation of the curriculum. The reflection process served as a foundation for making recommendations and adaptions for the future implementation of the curriculum by other facilitators.

Framework

The theoretical framework of this project was informed by strength-based perspectives. Successful aging was the central theory used in the development of this curriculum. Strengths based perspectives (Chapin and Cox) shift the focus of pathology or viewing the person as the problem and instead focuses on the strengths and resources of the person and their environment (2001). This framework also acknowledges the skills and knowledge the person already possesses. Resilience increases one’s ability to cope with difficulties (Chapin and Cox, 2001). This framework shifts services delivery for
elders and supports them in feeling in control of the changing contexts of life circumstances (Chapin and Cox, 2001).

Curriculum Design Process

The initial development of the curriculum was guided by the literature, as well as my previous experience teaching movement and mindfulness. Through the literature the themes of purpose and control over one’s live, as well as engagement in enjoyable activities and connection to others were identified. During the development process, the goals of the curriculum were to provide a strength based perspective on the aging process. As well as make a curriculum that was easily presentable by anyone, using a simple format to provide an easy of understanding the material. The use of peers as support, and offering various activities to explore the themes were also a central focus.

Participants

The participants of this project were aging community members who attend the Adult Day Health Program and Alzheimer’s Service Program (ADH and AS) at the Humboldt Senior Resources Center (HSRC). The HSRC is located in Eureka, California, providing a centralized location for seniors in Humboldt County. The Humboldt Senior Resource Center (2014) fact sheets stated that the ADH and AS program are a licensed day program that offers individualized care in a community based setting. Their services include daily supervision, socialization with peers, structured activities and field trips. The ADH and AS program is also licensed to offer medical care which includes nurses, physical, occupational and speech therapists. The program provides transportation to the
participants which increases the accessibility to their services. The Humboldt Senior Resource Center (2014) report their participants experience an increased sense of happiness through socialization with peers and engagement in activities. Turner (2004) also identified participating in senior resource centers experience increased life satisfaction through engaged with peers, daily activity and access to additional community services.

Three weeks prior to implementation the facilitator visited the Adult Day Health program and spoke to participants about the upcoming class, engaging the participants and explaining that material. Flyers were displayed throughout the building and distributed to participants and their families.

Consent Process

At the beginning of each class the researcher provided a brief explanation of the informed consent forms and surveys. The research answered any questions that participants may have. The consent form and surveys were on two separate forms, stapled together. Participants who do not wish to sign the informed consent form were still welcome to participate in the class. Informed consent forms and surveys were collected by the researcher and separated to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Participates were not compensated for participation, however their input helped shape future implementation of the program.

Program Design and Materials
The program was designed to be implemented in a group setting to foster community, which the ADH and AS program provided. The class was offered every week for six weeks on Thursday from ten thirty to eleven thirty in the morning. The materials used in the class were minimal. In weeks two, three, four and five handouts were provided to all of the participants. On the final class the facilitator purchased flowers, pots, and soil for the closing exercise. In the original implementation of the curriculum the facilitator planned to use videos and music, however the setting of the ADH and AS program did not support the use of DVD’s or internet videos.

Curriculum Evaluation

The curriculum was evaluated at the end of the class each week. Participants were invited to take part in a five-minute survey. The survey contained four statements and feedback was given using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not helpful), 2 (somewhat helpful), 3 (neutral), 4 (helpful), 5 (very helpful) to assess if the skills presented in class would be beneficial to the wellbeing of the participants. The fifth question provided an open ended question for comments and feedback. The statements were:

These skills were helpful to support my physical health?
These skills were helpful to support my mental health?
These skills were helpful to support my emotional health?
These skills were helpful to support my spiritual health?
The results of this project included the development of a strength based six-week curriculum to support the holistic needs of aging adults. This curriculum was delivered to the Humboldt Senior Resource Center. The curriculum was refined through participant feedback. A manual was developed from this process to assist future facilitators and promote the sustainability of this curriculum.

Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum was to be used interactively and adapted to the interests and abilities of the participants. Each class explored a different dimension of aging and wellness informed by the theory of successful aging. The activities included group discussion, a check-in based on the theme and then a check-out for reflection, as well as mindfulness breath and movement exercises. The class was set up in a circle to encourage engagement and interaction among the participants, as well as for safety, allowing the facilitator to view all the participants and move around the room with ease. The circle was set up weekly with empty spaces to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. The implementation process and feedback from participants shaped and strengthened the information and exercises offered. After implementation a manual was created for future facilitators offering exercises and strategies for successful future implementation.

Week One

The focus in the first class was introducing the participants to the class content as well as the weekly structure. For continuity, the structure of the class is similar each
week, with an introduction to the topic at the beginning of class which will be explored through class discussion, a check-in, then a mindfulness breathing exercise, movement exercises, and a check-out for reflection and processing. The curriculum created in week one was informed by the theory of successful aging, and strives to cultivate a sense of life engagement and control of their lives by recognizing the skills they already possess to create personal well-being. The curriculum introduced the participants to the practice of mindfulness through breath-centered gentle physical activity. All three of these practices have been shown in the literature to promote resiliency in aging adults.

Table 1: Week One Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions to class material</td>
<td>Group Introductions /Check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Introductions</td>
<td>Group Introductions /Check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify self-care and self-management skills already being used</td>
<td>Group Introductions /Check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore breath and movement practices</td>
<td>Seated movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce mindfulness</td>
<td>Centering Breath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week Two**

In week two the class focused on relaxation techniques. The goal of the class was to explore and elicit skills that participants are already using, as well as introduce new strategies and skills. The class offered four different techniques for relaxing through movement and two different exercises for the mind, progressive relaxation and guided imagery. This curriculum continued to draw on the literature which informed the
previous class, offering the participants alternative practices to engage in self-management of moods and thoughts. Mindfulness literature shows the benefit in exploring the exercises and adapting them to ones’ own needs to strengthen the sense of control over their experiences. Guiding participants to the understanding of their own inner wisdom, which can often be lost in the medical model wellness programs where health providers are the experts.

Table 2: Week Two Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Two Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore different relaxation techniques</td>
<td>Seated Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive Relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guided Imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce relaxation breathing exercise</td>
<td>Belly Breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify personalized relaxation skills</td>
<td>Check-in and Check-out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Three

In the curriculum content of week three built on previously explored movements, offering a variation of poses, including standing poses. The movements were also linked to the theme of safety and discussion of fall-risk prevention strategies.
Table 3: Week Three Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Three Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify personalized skills for fall-risk prevention</td>
<td>Check-in and Check-Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer common fall-risk prevention strategies</td>
<td>Handout and Check-Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce standing exercises</td>
<td>Adaptable seated and standing poses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce energizing breath exercise</td>
<td>Alternate Nostril Breathing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Four

In week four the class explored the power of positive thoughts and gratitude practices. The discussion centered around identifying positive aspects of self and acknowledging thankfulness for important things in life. The movement exercises continued to build from previous weeks. The facilitator checked-in with participants and shaped the movement exercise around their interest and engagement with previous exercises.
Table 4: Week Four Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Four Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster positive thoughts and introduce gratitude practices</td>
<td>Check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold Gratitude Meditation</td>
<td>Check-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold Check-out Handout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer alternative mindfulness breathing exercise</td>
<td>Breath Counting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore personalized movement exercises</td>
<td>Offer alternative options of standing and seated exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Five

Week five explored changing roles and identities, a heavier topic of adapting to aging. The hope was by week five there was group cohesion and participants felt more comfortable to explore this topic. The meditation exercise of Tonglen, a Buddhist meditation practice and poetry offered alternative techniques to cope with loss and grief.
Table 5: Week Five Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Five Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss strength based roles as elders</td>
<td>Check-in and Check-out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Identify strategies for adapting to new roles and identities | Check-in  
Tonglen Practice  
Poetry  
Handout |
| Explore personalized movement exercises | Offer alternative options of standing and seated exercises |

**Week Six**

The goal of week six was to provide reflection and wrap up. The facilitator was again encouraged to let the participants guide the mediation and movement for this class, allowing them to feel in charge of the class content. After movement, a closing gardening exercises was facilitated. Students were invited to reflect on all of the classes they have attended, identifying new skills and recognizing the strengths of their previous skills.
Table 6: Week Six Goals & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Six Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify social support systems</td>
<td>Check-Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify new skills and strategies for self-care</td>
<td>Check-in and Closing Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of closing and reflection</td>
<td>Check-out and Closing exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore personalized movement exercises</td>
<td>Offer alternative options of standing and seated exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

The classes were well attended. The participants were from three different groups within the Humboldt Senior Resource Center, the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and community members from both buildings within the Adult Day Health program. There was a group of students who attended every Thursday, as well as participants who dropped-in for one or two classes. The structure of the classes allowed for one-time attendance, however the material continued to build on information from previous weeks. Participants who attended all six weeks reported a more enriching experience. In week four there was a field trip through the ADH & AS program into Henderson Center, where participants could shop downtown and eat lunch. A large number of elders went on this field trip, which reduced the number of participants in week four. However, many returned for the following two weeks.
Table 7: Weekly Participants & Returning Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Returning Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Four</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Five</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Six</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveys

The surveys given out at the end of each class were used to evaluate the material and improve the curriculum. The survey evaluated four statements regarding holistic health, and the fifth question provided a space for open ended feedback. The results of the survey were positive. However other methods may have better captured the participants’ experiences, which will be further discussed in the limitations section.

Week One

Fourteen participants, twelve surveys filled out.
Table 8: Week One Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1(not helpful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3(neutral)</th>
<th>4 (helpful)</th>
<th>5 (very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) Moving feels good. I want to try Tai Chi class. (2) Maybe offer this twice a week?

Week Two

Twelve participants, eleven surveys filled out.

Table 9: Week Two Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1(not helpful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3(neutral)</th>
<th>4 (helpful)</th>
<th>5 (very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) Breathing and moving together feels good for my body and mind. (2) It is good to relax, I need help slowing down and taking time. Thank you for sharing relaxing ideas. (3) It feels nice to just breath. (4) A take home video would be nice.
**Week Three**

Thirteen participants, ten surveys filled out

Table 10: Week Three Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 (not helpful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3 (neutral)</th>
<th>4 (helpful)</th>
<th>5 (very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) The tapping exercise was very fun (2) Tapping made me feel good. (3) I found the breathing exercises relaxing. (4) I like the handout, and my daughter will like to read it too. This information is good for our family.
Week Four

Eight participants, five surveys filled out

Table 11: Week Four Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1(not helpful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3 (neutral)</th>
<th>4 (helpful)</th>
<th>5 (very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) I like the way things are going. (2) It’s nice to slow down and breath. (3) I already keep a gratitude log, and it is a good thing. It makes me feel happy.

Week Five

Twelve participants, ten surveys completed.

Table 12: Week Five Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1(not helpful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3 (neutral)</th>
<th>4 (helpful)</th>
<th>5 (very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) The poem was nice. (2) I like trying new mediations. (3) Very nice, glad I am here with you. (4) I think a recording with your voice to bring home would be great.
Week Six

Fourteen participants, eleven surveys completed.

Table 13: Week Six Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1(not helpful)</th>
<th>2(somewhat helpful)</th>
<th>3(neutral)</th>
<th>4(helpful)</th>
<th>5(very helpful)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Two</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Feedback and Comments: (1) Thank you (2) Happy I am was here, hope you keep coming. (3) It was all good. (4) I had good time here, with everyone and you too, wish my husband would come. (5) Thanks. I like my plant. (6) I really like gardening and purple pansies are one of my favorites.

Inductive Content Analysis

A General Inductive Approach of the survey data was used to draw themes from the feedback. According to Thomas (2006), inductive analysis is a method used to find emerging themes within raw data. This method is commonly used in health and social service research and program evaluation to evaluate the themes, as well as the importance of the themes to the research participants (2006, Thomas). This analysis allowed for the exploration the importance of the information to the participants, drawing out three emerging themes from the survey results. From the forty-eight surveys completed over
the six classes, three themes emerged from the inductive content analysis: an interest for
the programing, an enjoyment of the class material and a desire to share the information
with family and friends. The themes identified during this analysis process were used to
inform future implementation of the program, specifically, these themes guided
recommendations for future facilitators.

**Interest**

The first theme identified was interest: there was feedback throughout the
program implementation that suggested the participants had an interest in the class
content. They wanted it offered more frequently throughout the week and meet all of the
curriculum with interest and explored how to gain additional access to this information.

Some of the survey results that highlight this theme included:

“Moving feels good. I want to try Tai Chi class.”

“Maybe offer this twice a week?”

“Happy I am was here, hope you keep coming.”

“It is good to relax, I need help slowing down and taking time. Thank you for sharing
relaxing ideas.”

“I like trying new mediations.”

**Enjoyment**

Another theme identified through the analysis of the raw data was an enjoyment
in the material. Participants demonstrated a desire to learn these skills and found the
curriculum fun to engage with. The participants arrived weekly with the desire and
capacity to engage with the curriculum, with an average of seven returning participants each week. All of the surveys results very positive with either (4) helpful or (5) very helpful results. Some of the quotes that highlights the participants’ enjoyment of the material included:

“Very nice, glad I am here with you.”

“I like the way things are going.”

“It’s nice to slow down and breath.”

“The tapping exercise was very fun.”

“Tapping made me feel good.”

“I found the breathing exercises relaxing.”

Desire to Share

The final theme that emerged from the data results was a desire to share the material. Participants requested several times to have additional materials so they could share the class content with friends, roommates, caregivers and family members. Some identified that specific material would be helpful, while others wanted their family members and caregivers to understand the ideas that emerged throughout the classes. The data that supports this theme included:

“I think a recording with your voice to bring home would be great.”

“I like the handout, and my daughter will like to read it too. This information is good for our family.”

“A take home video would be nice.”
“I had good time here, with everyone and you too, wish my husband would come.”
CONCLUSION

Limitations

The use of surveys in the study proved to be a limitation. The richness of responses through discussion and group processing were not captured through the surveys. The participants were so happy to have the programming that they did not provide much critical feedback through the surveys. The majority of survey responses were positive and the suggestions for additions to the curriculum were voiced verbally. This limitation may have also been connected to the population of the study. Completing the survey was difficult for some participants due to varying reading and writing abilities. Many participants used the support of the program aide to fill out the surveys. Without her support, there would have been fewer survey results. The survey was created to be simple for the ease of understanding for the participants, however the simplicity of the survey overlooked the full expression of the participants’ experiences.

The Humboldt Resource Center provided a centralization location and established program to present the curriculum. The Adult Day Health and PACE program bus in participants from the Eureka surrounding areas. The weekly participation average was twelve, which is a small sample size, however when working with elders, a smaller group allows for more individualized attention and additional safety for participants. It is recommended to offer smaller classes with additional times throughout the week instead of larger classes. The curriculum has the potential to reach many elders in this community. However, the class was only offered on Thursdays. Many Adult Day Health
and PACE participants do not attend every day. Offering the class as a planned activity will reach many more participants of the programs. According to a report by the Area One Agency on Aging, *Gray Matters: Getting Humboldt on Track for an Aging Population* (2011), there is a large percent of aging adults in Humboldt that live in rural areas with a lack of access to services. There is a large unmet need of services and programming in more remote communities in the county. This was a limitation of the implementation; however with the development of the curriculum it can be easily shared with the other Adult Day Health Programs in the county.

**Suggestions for Future Facilitators**

The curriculum manual was written for ease of understanding in the hopes that anyone could pick it up and present it. The manual included advice for future facilitators as well as suggestions and tips for implementation. The following are excerpts from the manual:

**Adaptability and Accessibility**

The goal of the program was to present material that are adaptable and accessible to all of the participants. Within the aging population there can be a wide variation in cognitive function, as well as physical ability. The material aimed to convene the importance of adjusting the material to allow all the participants an opportunity to engage. Equally, as important as the material is the facilitator. It is imperative for the facilitator to present the material in an understandable, adaptable and applicable way for the participants.
This curriculum was created to support the need of aging seniors in a community-based setting. The weekly themes are intended to explore aging through a strength-based perspective, encouraging the participants to identify strengths and supports within their lives. The program is meant to be implemented to fit the unique needs of each group. As the facilitator, please adapt all of the material to make it accessible and appropriate for your group. (Introduction to Strategies for Successful Aging, see Appendix D).

**Capacity Building**

As the classes progressed the exercises require an increased skill level. Participants have the foundational skills to practice the basic expression of the pose, or explore it further. The topics discussed also increased in sensitivity, each week. The goal was to encourage a sense of mastery of the poses, and support skill development.

The breath and movement exercises are meant to build on each other increasing the skill needed. After exploring the poses in the first few classes, feel free to alter the classes from what is offered that week. Encourage participants to shape the offering, repeating the exercises they have enjoyed. The words written in italics are meant to be stated directly to the participants, but feel free to state the directions in your own authentic words. (Introduction to Strategies for Successful Aging, see Appendix D).

**Creating a Container**

The facilitator is encouraged to offer an open space for elders to reflect. Angus and Reeves (2006) with dominant narratives of aging, the experience of elders are often
viewed as homogenous. The aim of creating this container, is to allow participants a space to speak authentically about their aging experiences. During the pilot program participants explored a wide variety of experiences, from wanting more sex, to not wanting to not bother children, adapting to less drinking or loss of a loved one. The sharing of this content was made possible with the safety to explore created by the facilitator.

As the facilitator, honor each participant’s sharing while also drawing parallels between each of the stories. Allow the participants a place for authentic and uncensored expression. This curriculum was informed by my many years of teaching breath and movement. Please check in with the activities coordinator regarding the specific needs of the participants, or if you have facilitation questions. If you are unfamiliar with these exercises refer to the resource page at the end of the curriculum. Also, please use the support of the activities coordinator and adult program staff to make the material appropriate, accessible, and adaptable for each participant (Introduction to Strategies for Successful Aging, see Appendix D).

The strategies and suggestions in the manual are to offer continuity to the curriculum implementation. As well, to create safer spaces for seniors to share their experiences in a supportive and uncensored environment. The richness of the experience comes from the participants’ willingness to share and engage, thus creating buy-in and safety are fundamental. It is also important for facilitators to take time for self-reflection. Cultivating self-awareness around personal feelings of aging and possible ageist biases.
Using a strength based perspective, it is important to honor their individual experiences and the multidimensional experience of aging, as well as acknowledging the commonalities and connections.

Sustainability

During the implementation of the program, a program aide from the Humboldt Senior Resource Center attended all of the classes. The program aide had previously established relationships with the participants, which was helpful for the participants and myself, as the facilitator. I was able to gain additional insight into the needs of the participants from the program aide. It also provided continuity and familiarity to the participants. Another purpose for the aide’s attendance, was sustainability. The program aide offers movement to participants at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center. The hope is they will continue the work of the class. Enriching her knowledge and offering to the participants. This curriculum will also be available to volunteers or employees at the Humboldt Resource Center. The curriculum was created for ease of understanding and ability to adapt and present to future elders. The sustainability of this curriculum is largely dependent on a commitment from volunteers or employees to continue the implementation of the curriculum, as well as the organizational support of strength based programing.
Next Steps

The implementation of this curriculum at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center was well received. The goal was to create a curriculum that met an unmet need for seniors to see themselves in their strength’s. The participants were engaged and reported benefiting from the exercises and the experience of the classes. Next steps could include offering a training to volunteers and employees of this program or the other two Adult Day Health Programs in Humboldt County. The curriculum was created to be adapted to the diverse needs of seniors at the HSRC. This was informed by a strengths based framework. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt and revise the curriculum weekly to meet the specific needs of the participants.

Final Reflections

The development of this curriculum was guided by the literature that focuses on activities that support resiliency in the aging process. The class was well attended by participants who actively engaged with the curriculum. They reported enjoyment, as well as many other benefits. The feedback informed the development of a manual to continue the implementation of the program. The participants identified a need to have this class at the ADH and AS program. There was also a desire to share this material with friends and family. The hope is that this curriculum will continue to be adapted and offered at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center, as well as programs supporting seniors throughout the county. Strengths based programs allow participants to transform their experiences of suffering, embrace change with courage, find meaning, joy and connection in their daily
lives. Exploring alternative program models benefits the holistic health of elders and encourages health care providers to view aging through a new perspective.
REFERENCES


Retrieved from:


http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ije/31.4.776
Strategies for Successful Aging

A 5-week class at the
*Adult Day Health and Alzheimer’s Services Program*

**Thursdays 10:30 am -11:30 am**

The goals of the class will include the following:

- Mindfulness and breathing exercises
- Movement that is adaptable to all skill levels with a focus on fall risk prevention
- Self-management skills to support your total well-being
- Engagement with peers in a supportive setting

Please call anna for more information, or with any questions  707-616-9255
Appendix B: Strategies for Successful Aging Participation Consent Form

Strategies for Successful Aging Participation Consent Form

You are being invited to take a survey about the Strategies for Successful Aging class. Findings from this survey will help shape the development of future activities at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center and will be used in my master’s project. It should take about five minutes to complete. There are no benefits or risks to you for participating and your participation is completely voluntary. Responses are confidential and no identifying information will be used.

For more information you may contact me, the main investigator, anna o’gorman at ao62@humboldt.edu or 707-616-9255

If you have further questions about this project, contact the Faculty Advisor, Yvonne Doble at yvonnedoble@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-4447

If you have any concerns with this study, contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Dr. Ethan Gahtan, at eg51@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-4545.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, report them to the Humboldt State University Dean of Research, Dr. Rhea Williamson, at Rhea.Williamson@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5169.

I understand that the Investigator will answer any questions I have about this study. I also understand my participation is voluntary and I may stop at any time. I have read and understand the information provided, and agree to participate in the survey.

Name: ___________________________________ Date: ________________

Signature of Participant: __________________________________________

If you would like a copy of this form for your future reference please contact the main investigator. Thank you for your participation in this research.
Appendix C: Successful Strategies for Aging Survey

Successful Strategies for Aging Survey

On a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful) please rate the class content.  
1(not helpful)2(somewhat helpful)3(neutral)4 (helpful) 5 (very helpful)

Please circle your answer.

These skills were helpful to support my physical health?
(not helpful) (somewhat helpful) (neutral) (helpful) (very helpful)

These skills were helpful to support my mental health?
(not helpful) (somewhat helpful) (neutral) (helpful) (very helpful)

These skills were helpful to support my emotional health?
(not helpful) (somewhat helpful) (neutral) (helpful) (very helpful)

These skills were helpful to support my spiritual health?
(not helpful) (somewhat helpful) (neutral) (helpful) (very helpful)

Please feel free to add any additional feedback or comments. Thank You.
Appendix D: Strategies for Successful Aging Manual

This page intentionally left blank to allow for merging of documents.

Please see next page for Manual
Strategies for Successful Aging

A Holistic and Community Based Wellness Program
Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the support of the Humboldt Senior Resource Center. Thank you to Joanne, Maria, and Myriah, also thanks to Ann and all the weekly participants who helped shape this curriculum. Your engagement and enjoyment of the material made this project a joy. Additionally, thank you to Yvonne and Jayne for offering support through Humboldt State University.
Table of Contents

Introduction
Suggestions for Facilitators
Week One: Introductions: Acknowledging Skills and Identifying Strengths
Week Two: Relaxation Techniques
Week Three: Safety and Fall Risk Prevention
Week Four: Positive Thinking
Week Five: Adapting to Aging and New Identities
Week Six: Closing: Identifying New Skills and Social Support
Appendix I: Relaxation Handout
Appendix II: Fall Risk Prevention Handout
Appendix III: Positive Thinking and Gratitude Handout
Appendix IV: Poem: In Blackwater Woods By Mary Oliver
Appendix V: Additional Resources
Appendix VI: Sample Poster
This curriculum was created to support the need of aging seniors in a community based setting. The weekly themes are intended to explore aging through a strength-based perspective, encouraging the participants to identify strengths and supports within their lives. The program is meant to be implemented to fit the unique needs of each group. There is a weekly structure of the activities to create continuity for the participants. As the facilitator, please adapt all of the material to make it accessible and appropriate for your group. The breath and movement exercises are meant to build on each other, increasing the skill needed each week. After exploring the poses in the first few classes, feel free to alter the mindfulness and movement exercises for the remaining weeks. Encourage participants to shape the offering, repeating the exercises they have enjoyed. The words written in italics are meant to be stated directly to the participants, but feel free to state the directions in your own authentic words. As the facilitator, honor each participant’s sharing while also drawing parallels between each of the stories. This curriculum was informed by my many years of teaching breath and movement, my hope is you can just pick it up and offer the material; however if you have questions, ask. Please check in with the activities coordinator regarding the specific needs of the participants. If you are unfamiliar with these exercises refer to the resource page at the end of the curriculum. Also, please use the support of the activities coordinator and adult program staff to make the material appropriate, accessible, and adaptable for each participant.
Suggestions for Facilitators

• Welcome each guest, check in to see if they will need special accommodations.

• Use a strengths based perspective, use encouragement and draw connections between different participants stories. Try to engage all the group members, by creating an opportunity for each participant to contribute.

• Keep the directions simple, using words that participants can understand.

• Allow time for participants to respond or engage in activities. Silence and moments of pause are okay.

• Allow for participants to process sensitive information during check in and reflection, like grief or losing a loved one or possibly taboo, such as, sex as an elder.

• If participants are having a difficult time understanding, try to explain using different words.

• Demonstrate the movements, and then encourage participants to personalize the pose. Walk around the room to ensure everyone is performing the exercises safely.

• Be prepared to offer variations and alternatives to each exercise.

• Encourage the group to connect, and reflect together. Turn questions back on the group and support them in finding the solutions.

• If a participant is combative or argumentative offer alternative options (something as simple as, sit and focus on the breath), or ‘passing’ during group discussion. Participants are welcome to leave. Check in with the participant after group to see what unmet need they have.
Week One: Introductions

Goals:

- Introduction of group members
- Introduction of course content and weekly format
- Identify self-care and self-management skills already used
- Explore breath and movement practices
- Introduce Mindfulness

* Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Welcome each participant as they arrive.

Introductions

Hello everyone. My name is {insert your name} Welcome to Successful Strategies for Aging. We will be meeting for the next six weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit as we age. Research shows that there are activities we can engage in to bring more ease to the aging process. Each week we will have a check-in, exploring different themes around how to keep our minds, bodies, and spirits strong as we age. After the check-in we will try different breath and movement exercises. You may enjoy some exercises more than others, and that is ok. The point of our time together is to strengthen what you already know and learn new skills. At the end of each class we will check back in and reflect on what we did together.

It is important to acknowledge that there are already things we do every day to take care of ourselves, like drinking water, going to bed early, playing bingo, or doing crossword puzzles, as well as enjoying social interactions with friends and family. Often, we view aging through a negative lens. And, while it is true that aging has its challenges, it can also be a special time with unique joys. During this class I hope we can safely share our challenges and joys. Now we are going to go around the circle and introduce ourselves. Please say your name and then tell the group one thing that you already do to take care of yourself. I will start. Facilitator re-states name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank each participant for their sharing.
Week One: Introductions

One of the ways to take care of ourselves is through movement and breathing exercises, also known as meditation. We are now going to explore various exercise that use our body and breath to help us feel good.

*Before offering any breathing and movement exercises let the participants know that these exercise are to be done with ease. If they experience any discomfort, lightheadedness or pain they should stop immediately and tell the facilitator who will either offer a modification or another exercise.

Each week we will perform breathing and movement exercises. Studies show that breath and movement are powerful resources in supporting our total wellness.

Breathing Exercise:
Centering Breath
Next, we will next come into some movement exercises. Continue to stay connected to the movement of breath in your body. Inhale, Exhale, as we begin moving, continue to focus on the breath. Seeing if you can match the movement and the breath together.

Movement:
Arm Wrap Up One
Arm Wrap Up Two
Shoulder Circles
Neck Series
Chest Opener
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Side Stretch
Twist
Week One: Introductions

Movement Continued

Ankle Stretch
Calf Stretch
Hip Stretch
Star Stretch

Reflection:

At the end of every class offer a space for participants to reflect on their experience.

To end class, we are going to go around and reflect on the class. Feel free to share about your experience. Maybe you can share something you enjoyed or learned today? Or what the class was like for you? Perhaps thinking about how this material connects with other parts of your life? Whatever you feel comfortable sharing.
Week Two: Relaxation Techniques

• Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Materials Needed:
Before class collect five to six different pictures that could invoke relaxation. For the first class I chose pictures of a sunset, a family sharing food, elders laughing together, people playing on the beach, a musical concert, and a forest scene. Feel free to be creative while collecting photos.

Relaxation Handout
Goals:

• Explore different relaxation techniques
• Introduce relaxation breathing exercises
• Identify personalized relaxation skills

Hello to new faces and welcome back to folks who were here last week. This is Successful Strategies for Aging. We will be meeting for the next five weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit. Let’s review our time together from last week. What are some things we did last week that stand out to you? Allow for a few moments of reflection. If necessary, suggest some prompts. The reiteration of previous materials can strengthen their understanding, and can also help create links to their lives on how these strategies can be helpful.

This week are will explore different relaxation techniques. Finding relaxation in our daily lives can help uplift our minds, bodies, and spirits. Regularly practicing relaxation exercises can strengthen the body's immune system, help control blood pressure, reduce stress, and diminish pain. Now we are going to have a group check-in. When it is your turn, please introduce yourself to the group, stating your name and one thing that you like to do to relax. I will start.

Facilitator states name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank each participant for their sharing.
*Before offering any breathing and movement exercises, let the participants know that these exercises are to be done with ease. If they experience any discomfort, lightheadedness or pain, they should stop immediately and tell the facilitator, who will either offer a modification or another exercise.

**Breathing Exercise:**

Belly Breathing

**Movement:**

Arm Wrap Up One
Strong Arms
Shoulder Circles
Neck Series
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Side Stretch
Twist
Forward Fold
Ankle Stretch
Calf Stretch
Hip Stretch
Star Stretch

**Progressive Relaxation**
Week Two: Relaxation Techniques

Using the different photos that have been collected, show each to the group and ask for their feedback and thoughts. Facilitate a discussion with the group identifying different images, places, people, or things that offer them relaxation.

Guided Imagery

Distribute relaxation handout, and go over.

Reflection:

At the end of every class offer a space for participants to reflect on their experience.

To end class, we are going to go around and reflect on our experiences today. Today we tried different relaxation techniques, it is important to remember that not every technique works for everyone. Feel free to share something you enjoyed or learned today? Or what the class was like for you? Did you find any of the exercises relaxing? Did you learn a new technique for creating relaxation in your life? Perhaps thinking about how this material connects with other parts of your life? Whatever you feel comfortable sharing.
Week Three: Safety and Fall Risk Prevention

* Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Materials:
Fall Risk Prevention Handout

Goals:

- Identify personalized skills for fall risk prevention
- Give guidelines for fall risk prevention
- Introduce standing exercises
- Introduce energizing breath exercise

Hello to new faces and welcome back to folks who were here last week. This is Successful Strategies for Aging. We will be meeting for the next four weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit. Let’s review our time together from last week. What are some things we did last week that stand out to you? Allow for a few moments of reflection. If necessary, suggest some prompts. The reiteration of previous materials can strengthen their understanding, and can also help create links to their lives on how these strategies can be helpful.

This week we are going to explore different ways to keep ourselves safe. One of the strategies to keep ourselves safe is thinking of ways to reduce and prevent falls. Some of the strategies include good footwear, removing rugs from around our houses, using a life alert emergency response system and practicing strengthening and flexibility exercises. Falling can cause serious injuries as we age. Keeping ourselves safe can help us maintain our independence as well as create peace of mind. Now we are going to start with a check-in. When it is our turn, please introduce yourself to the group, stating your name and one thing you do to keep yourself safe everyday. I will start.

Facilitator states their name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank every participant for their sharing.
Week Three: Safety and Fall Risk Prevention

Breathing Exercises:
Alternate Nostril Breath

Movement:
Tapping Exercise
Arm Warm Up One
Strong Arms
Shoulder Circles
Neck Series
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Opening Spine Sequence
Stand to Sit Exercise

*After the exercise, participants are welcome to remain seated or practice standing, taking all safety precautions in place at the program setting. Assist participants in moving their chairs forward so they can stand behind the chair for balance support. Let participants know they can come to sitting at any point to complete the exercises.

Side Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Twist (Seated or Standing)
Forward Fold (Seated or Standing)
Ankle Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Calf Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Star Stretch (Seated or Standing)

If you are standing, come to a comfortable seated position.

Centering Breath Exercise
Week Three: Safety and Fall Risk Prevention

Distribute and review handout together. If participants find it useful, they are welcome to take it home. Let participants know their family or caregiver may find the handout help as well.

Reflection:

At the end of every class offer a space for participants to reflect on their experience.

*To end class, we are going to go around and reflect on class today. Feel free to share about your experience. Maybe you can share something you enjoyed or learned today? Or what the class was like for you? Did you find any of the exercises helpful for your safety? Perhaps think about how this material connects with other parts of your life? Whatever you feel comfortable sharing.*
Week Four: Positive Thinking

- Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Materials:
Positive Thinking and Gratitude Handout

Goals:
- Discuss how to foster positive thoughts
- Identify positive thoughts
- Introduce Gratitude Practices
- Introduce Breath Counting exercise
- Explore personalized movement exercises

Hello to new faces and welcome back to folks who were here last week. Welcome to Successful Strategies for Aging. We will be meeting for the next three weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit. Let’s review our time together from last week. What are some things we did last week that stand out to you? Allow for a few moments of reflection. If necessary, suggest some prompts. The reiteration of previous materials can strengthen their understanding, and can also help create links to their lives on how these strategies can be helpful.

This week we are going to explore positive thinking. As we get older we can start to experience more loss and grief. Sometimes we can get overwhelmed or stuck in negative thinking. However, positive thinking can allow us the power to choose how to deal with the events that arise in our lives. Engaging in positive thinking is a practice that can take effort but the effort can pay off. Positive thinking can help us face challenging situations with strength and grace. Positive thoughts can help us recover more quickly from injuries, reduce stress, help us feel more in control of our lives, and increase engagement in healthy behaviors. A sense of humor can be helpful too! Gratitude lists or journals are one of the strategies of positive thinking. We are going to start with a check-in. When it is your turn, please introduce yourself to the group, stating your name and one thing you are grateful for. I will start.

Facilitator states their name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank every participant for their sharing.
**Week Four: Positive Thinking**

**Breathing Exercise:**

Breath Counting

**Movement:**

Tapping Exercise
Arm Warm Up One
Strong Arms
Shoulder Circles
Neck Series
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Opening Spine Sequence
Stand to Sit Exercise

*After the exercise, participants are welcome to remain seated or practice standing taking all safety precautions in place at the program setting. Assist participants in moving their chairs forward so they can stand behind the chair for balance support. Let participants know they can come to sitting at any point to complete the exercises.

Side Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Twist (Seated or Standing)
Forward Fold (Seated or Standing)
Ankle Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Calf Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Star Stretch (Seated or Standing)

If you are standing, come to a comfortable seated position.
Self Love Meditation
Distribute and review Positive Thinking and Gratitude handout.

**Reflection:**
At the end of every class offer a space for participants to reflect on their experience.

*To end class, we are going to go around and reflect on class today. Feel free to share about your experience. Maybe you can share something you enjoyed or learned today? Or what the class was like for you? Did you find any of the exercises helpful to you? Perhaps thinking about how this material connects with other parts of your life? Whatever you feel comfortable sharing*
Week Five: Adapting to Aging and New Identities

- Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Materials Needed:
Poem Handout
Mental Health Handout

Goals:

- Discuss roles as elders, encourage strength based perspectives
- Identify strategies for adapting to new roles and identities
- Explore personalized movement exercises

Hello to new faces and welcome back to folks who were here last week. Welcome to Successful Strategies for Aging. We will be meeting for the next three weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit. Let’s review our time together from last week. What are some things we did last week that stand out to you? Allow for a few moments of reflection. If necessary, suggest some prompts. The reiteration of previous materials can strengthen their understanding, and can also help create links to their lives of how these strategies can be helpful.

This week we are going to explore strategies for adapting to aging and new identities. We are going to start with a check-in. When it is your turn, please introduce yourself to the group, stating your name and either identifying a new role you have, such as a being a grandparent or volunteering after retirement or discussing your experience adapting to aging. I will start.

Facilitator states their name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank every participant for their sharing.
Week Five: Adapting to Aging and New Identities

Breath Exercise:
Tonglen

Movement:
Tapping Exercise
Arm Warm Up One
Strong Arms
Shoulder Stretch
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Opening Spine Sequence
Seated Knee to Chest
Twist
Stand to Sit Exercise

*After the exercise, participants are welcome to remain seated or practice standing taking all safety precautions in place at the program setting. Assist participants in moving their chairs forward so they can stand behind the chair for balance support. Let participants know they can come to sitting at any point to complete the exercises.

Side Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Forward Fold (Seated or Standing)
Ankle Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Calf Stretch (Seated or Standing)
Star Stretch (Seated or Standing)
If you are standing, come to a comfortable seated position.
Week Five: Adapting to Aging and New Identities

Meditation

Poem

Distribute and review Mental Health handout

Offer poem handout

Reflection:

At the end of every class offer a space for participants to reflect on their experience.

To end class, we are going to go around and check-in. Feel free to share about your experience. Maybe you can share something you enjoyed or learned today? Or what the class was like for you? Did you find any of the exercises helpful? Perhaps thinking about how this material connects with other parts of your life? Whatever you feel comfortable sharing.
Week Six: Closing: Identifying New Skills and Social Support

* Each week set up the chairs in a large circle, leaving spaces as necessary to accommodate wheelchairs.

Materials Needed:

Pots, Potting Soil and Flower Starts. Pick a resilient flower. I chose pansies, they are pretty, and don’t need direct sunlight. Before class starts find a counter, or place to set up the pots, and flower starts so it is ready for the closing exercise.

Goals:

• Identify social support systems
• Identify new skills and strategies for self-care
• Group closing and reflection exercise
• Explore personalized movement exercises

Hello to new faces and welcome back to folks who have attended class before. This is the last class of Successful Strategies for Aging. We have been meeting for the past five weeks to explore skills that support our mind, body, and spirit. Let’s review our time together from last week. What are some things we did last week that stand out to you? Allow for a few moments of reflection. If necessary, suggest some prompts. The reiteration of previous materials can strengthen their understanding, and can also help create links to their lives of how these strategies can be helpful.

This week we are going to explore social supports we have. At the end of class, we will also do a closing exercise and reflect on our time together. Having a network of social support as we age can provide many health benefits. Some of these benefits include companionship, supporting emotional well being, buffering stress by balancing the joys and setbacks of life, and an increase in engagement with different activities. Social support can include family, friends, people we will interact with at while volunteering or at the Adult Day Program, just to name a few. Now, we are going to start with a check-in. When it is your turn, please introduce yourself to the group, stating your name and stating a person or resource you have in your life that supports the wellness of your mind, body, or spirit. I will start.

Facilitator states their name and offers an example. Go in a circle. Thank every participant for their sharing.
Week Six: Closing: Identifying New Skills and Social Support

Movement:
Tapping Exercise
Arm Warm Up One
Strong Arms
Shoulder Circles
Neck Series
Wrist Stretch
Hand Stretch
Opening Spine Sequence
Knee to Chest
Side Stretch
Twist
Forward Fold
Ankle Stretch
Calf Stretch
Star Stretch
Week Six: Closing: Identifying New Skills and Social Support

Closing and Reflection Exercise:

I want to thank all of you for your participation. Your willingness to share your stories and explore these strategies together have made this class very special. I was hoping we could all do a closing exercise and reflection, sharing what we learned during our time together. I brought in these gardening supplies, many of you have stated that gardening helps you support your total well-being. If no one has mentioned gardening during the classes, you can omit this statement. Studies show that gardening can reduce stress, improve your mood and help keep you physical active. Learning new behaviors is similar to planting seeds and watching them grow. You also have to cultivate them to help them grow. We will all pick one of these pansies and then add potting soil to the new pots and then transfer the pansy into the new pot. We will add some soil on top and then add some water. If there is a gardener in the group, ask if they are willing to help. After we plant the pansies I hope we could go around and share new things we learned in class. Skills that we can to continue to cultivate to take care of ourselves. Feel free to share any other insights or thoughts about our time together. I would love to hear from everyone.

Thank you all so much. I will be here for a little bit cleaning up if anyone has any additional questions or thoughts.
**Movement/Exercises**

**Arm Warm Up One**

We will now start linking our breath and movement. On your next inhale, lift your arms out to the side, reaching them up overhead. On the exhale, reach the arms back out and down to your sides. Let’s do this again. Inhale arms up, exhale, arms down. *(model movement)* and again moving at your own pace, matching the movement to the breath, inhale up and exhale down. Three more times, your breath and your body. Inhale up and exhale down, releasing the movement and taking a breath in stillness. Inhale… and exhale.

**Arm Warm Up Two**

This next exercise is similar to the one we just did, but we are going to move our arms in a different direction. Inhale, arms up, reaching them straight out in front of you and overhead, exhale, releasing the arms down in front. We will continue doing this movement, inhale, reaching arms in front of the body and up overhead, exhale, releasing the arms. Move as fast or slow as the breath and body would like and find your own rhythm. Inhale up and exhale down. Now three more times, your breath and your body. Inhale up and exhale down, releasing the movement and taking a breath in stillness. Inhale… and exhale.

**Shoulder Circles**

Next, we are going to do some shoulders circles. As you inhale, bring the shoulders forward and reach them up toward the ears and then drop them down the back. Let’s do this again together inhaling shoulders forward, then up, exhaling back. One more time together inhaling forward, then up towards the ears and exhaling back. Now do this three times at your own pace with your breath, your body. *(Pause)* Now we are going to reverse the movement. Inhale, bring your shoulders onto the back of the body, then lift the shoulders up towards the ears and on the exhale bring the shoulders around to the front of the body. And again, inhale bringing the shoulders into the back body exhaling, bringing them towards the ears and then forward. We will do this three times on our own, pace your breath to your body. *(Pause for two breaths, on the third breath, cue again)* Inhale up and exhale down, releasing the movement and taking a breath in stillness. Inhale… and exhale.
**Movements/Exercises**

**Neck Series**

For the next movement, we will explore some neck stretches. Inhale, and as you exhale, let your right ear fall to your right shoulder. We will pause here for a few breaths to feel the stretch. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale and on your next exhale, slowly lower the chin to the chest, looking down, take a deep breath here, inhale and exhale. See if you can relax the jaw and face, three more breaths. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale and on this exhale bring the left ear to the left shoulder. Three deep breaths. Feeling into the sensation of the pose. Feel free to make any adjustments to this pose to feel a stretch. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. From here, there are two options. Either you can move through the stretches we just did slowly moving from right, to center and back to the left. Or if it sounds interesting and feels good, you could create a little more movement with neck circles. Slowly moving sides to side, and maybe if it feels good coming into full circles. Let yourself explore what feels best in your neck. Inhale and exhale, deep breaths. *(Physically show both options and then be available if folks need support. Pause for a few breaths)*

Continue to keep coming back to the breath, inhale and exhale. Six more breathes. *(Pause)* We are now going to release the movement and take a resting breath. Inhale and exhale.

**Wrist Stretch/Hand Stretch**

To stretch the wrist and hands we will start with the right wrist, making circles in one direction, inhale and exhale, three breaths. And then reverse the movement and circle the wrists in the opposite direction. inhale and exhale, three breaths. *(Pause)* Gently release that movement. Moving into the hands, inhale, opening the hand wide and exhale making a fist with the hand. Let’s do this three more times together. Inhale, open, and exhale, tightening the hand into a fist. And again two more times. Letting the breath and body work together. *(Pause for two breaths)* After the next exhale, release that movement and we will move to the other side. Now with the left wrist, make circles in one direction, inhale and exhale, three breaths. *(Pause)* And then reverse the movement and circle the wrists in the opposite direction. Inhale and exhale, three breaths. Gently release that movement. Moving into the hands, inhale, opening the hand wide and exhale, making a fist with the hand. Let’s do this three more times together. Inhale, open, and exhale, tightening the hand into a fist. And again two more times. Inhale and exhale, inhale and after the exhale, releasing this exercise.
Side Stretch

Now, we will come into a side stretch. Like we did earlier, we will inhale, arms up and as we exhale, we will bring the left hand down, either just releasing, or maybe holding the side of the chair, whichever feels best in your body. Then we will reach the right arm up, feeling a stretch in the spine, and then reach the arm over and across the head, to find a stretch in the side of our bodies. (point to the area) Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Three more breathes, opening up the side of your body. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale, and on our next exhale, reach both arms back up the ceiling. We will come into this stretch on the other side. Bring the right hand down, either just releasing, or maybe holding the side of the chair, whichever feels best in your body. Then we will reach the left arm up, feeling a stretch in the spine, and then reach the arm over and across the head, to find a stretch in the side of our bodies. (point to the area) Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Three more breathes, opening up the side of your body. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale and on the exhale, reach both arms up, Big inhale, reaching the arms and then exhale, release. Take a resting breath. Inhale and exhale.

Twist

Moving into a twist like we did earlier, we will inhale, arms up and as we exhale, and we will bring the left hand down, either to the right knee or maybe holding the side of the chair, whichever feels best in your body. Gently release the right arm down. See if you can feel the twist in the torso, let the neck relax and just look in the same direction the chest is facing. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breaths. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. On the last inhale you can stay right where you are and, if you are interested in gently stretching into the neck, inhale on and the exhale look towards your right shoulder, exhale, releasing back to center. Inhale on our next exhale reach both arms back up the ceiling. We will now move to the other side. Inhale, arms up and as we exhale, we will bring the right hand down, either to the left knee or maybe holding the side of the chair, whichever feels best in your body. Gently releasing the left arm down. See if you can feel the twist in the torso, let the neck relax and just look in the same direction the chest is facing. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breaths. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. On the last inhale you can stay right where you are and, if you are interested in gently stretching into the neck, inhale on and the exhale look towards your left shoulder, exhale, releasing back to center. Inhale and exhale, release the twist and come into a natural sitting position.
**Movements/Exercises**

**Forward Fold**

Next, we will come into a forward hold. Inhale, arms up and as you exhale, moving from the hips, releasing the upper body down. You have just moved slightly and then your arms can rest on your thighs. Maybe folding forward a little further and, if it feels good, you can rest your arms along the legs. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breaths. Inhale and exhale, *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale and exhale. On the next inhale, reach your arms back up and let the exhale assist you back up to a comfortable seated position.

**Ankle Stretch**

Moving down the body now come to an ankle stretch. Inhale, and on the exhale extend the right leg out in front of you. Inhaling and exhaling, slowly circling the ankle feeling into the range of movement. Inhale and exhale, continue for three deep breathes. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale and on the exhale, reverse the movement, circling the ankle in the opposite direction. Three deep breathes. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale, and on the exhale release the movement and the leg back down to the floor. We will now come to the other side. Inhale, and on the exhale extend the left leg out in front of you. Inhaling and exhaling, slowly circling the ankle, feeling into the range of movement. Inhale and exhale, continue for three deep breathes. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale and on the exhale, reverse the movement, circling the ankle in the opposite direction. Three deep breathes. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale, and on the exhale release the movement and the leg back down to the floor.

**Calf Stretch**

Now coming into a stretch for the entire calf and ankle, we will inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale, point the toes away from the body and as we exhale, point the toes back to the body. Inhale and exhale, lowering the leg back down to the floor. And again, inhale and exhale, extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale, point the toes away from the body and as we exhale, point the toes back to the body. Inhale and exhale, lowering the leg back down to the floor. And one more time together, inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. Now try it three times by yourself, moving with your breath and your body. *(Pause, but continue to model the movement. On the third breath)* Inhale and on the exhale lower the right foot to the floor.
Movement/ Exercises

Calf Stretch (continued)

Now, for the left leg. Inhale and exhale, extending the left leg out in front of us. As we inhale, point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body. Inhale and exhale, lowering the leg back down to the floor. And again, inhale and exhale extending the left leg out in front of us. As we inhale, point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body. Inhale and exhale, lowering the leg back down to the floor. And one more time together, inhale and exhale, extending the left leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body. Inhale and exhale, lowering the leg back down to the floor. Now try it three times by yourself, moving with your breath and your body. (Pause, but continue to model the movement.) On the third breath, inhale and on the exhale, lower the left foot to the floor. Take a resting breath, inhale and exhale.

Hip Stretch

We are now going to stretch our hips. If you are able, bring the right foot and either cross the left leg, or place the right ankle on the top of the left thigh. Now, like the forward fold we did earlier, inhale with arms up and as you exhale, moving from the hips, releasing the upper body down. You may just move slightly and then your arms can rest on your thighs. Maybe folding forward a little further, if it feels good and you can rest your arms along the legs. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breaths. Inhale and exhale, feeling into the stretch in your hips. (Pause for two breaths) Inhale and exhale. On the next inhale, reach the arms back up and let your exhale assist you back to a comfortable seated position. Release the right leg. Now for the left side. Bring the left foot across the body, to the right leg, or place the left ankle on the top of the right thigh. Come into a forward fold with the upper body. Inhale with arms up and as you exhale, moving from the hips, releasing the upper body down. You may just move slightly and then your arms can rest on your thighs. Maybe folding forward a little further, if it feels good and you can rest your arms along the legs. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breaths. Inhale and exhale, feeling into the stretch in your hips. (Pause for two breaths) Inhale and exhale. On the next inhale, reach the arms back up and let your exhale assist you back to a comfortable seated position. Release the left leg.
Movement/ Exercises

Star Stretch

With this next movement we will do a full body stretch. Inhale and exhaling, gently reach your legs out in front of you, and point your toes. Then we will add the arms. Inhale and exhale reaching the arms up and then out in opposite directions, stretching the arms, as well as the chest and back. Feel the body stretching in all four directions. Let’s take three deep breaths. Inhale, stretch, and exhale, releasing tension. Two more times (pause for a breath) Inhale, and on the exhale, release the stretch.

Tapping Exercise

The next exercise is a Qigong exercise that involves gently tapping the body, creating a sense of invigoration and energy. We will just start with our right-hand, gently tapping our left shoulder, slowly connecting to the breath. Inhale and exhale, tapping the shoulder and then slowly moving down the arm, the palm of your hand and then moving back up the under arm. As you tap apply as much pressure as feels good to you. When we reach the top of the arm, we will inhale and exhale reaching the arm up and tapping into the armpit and then down the side of the body and back up gently tapping into the chest seeing if you can reach behind you tapping the neck. Inhale and exhale. We will gently release this side and come into the tapping on the other side. Using your left hand, gently start tapping your right shoulder, again staying connected to the breath inhaling, slowly making your way down to the hand taking your time pause once you reach the hand tapping the top of the hand and the palm of the hand. Then slowly make your way back up tapping the under part of your arm when you reach the top gently tapping into your arm down the sides of the body and back up tapping the right chest with the left hand moving across the chest and then back across the chest up around the area of the neck maybe reaching the shoulders. Once you feel complete, we’ll release that movement and then we’ll take our hands onto our thighs, and start tapping our thighs, moving down the sides, and, if it feels good, you can gently tap the knees folding forward. If it’s accessible to you tap the fronts of the shins, maybe your ankles and feet. Then make your way back up tapping the sides of the legs, maybe even the calves if that feels good. Tap the sides of the thighs and then find our way back to a comfortable position. Taking two resting breaths, inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale.
Movement/Exercises

Opening Spine Sequence

This next pose is to open warm-up and open your spine. Let’s place our hands on our knees. As you inhale, stretch the chest forward, curving the back. Feel the opening in the front of your body. As you exhale, read the spine in the opposite direction, rounding the back and dropping the head down. We will continue to move back and forth through this pose, opening the front and the back of our body. Inhale forward and exhale, rounding back. Inhale, opening the chest and even looking up if that feels good in the neck. Exhaling, dropping the chin into the chest and rounding the back for three more deep breaths. Your breath, your body, trying to find a movement that feels good to you (Pause for three breaths) Inhale, and on the next exhale, gently release the hands and bring the spine back to a neutral position.

Stand to Sit Exercise

This next movement is sit to stand and this exercise will engage the muscles in our legs. (If participants have walkers, please place them in front of them. If a person is in a wheelchair, ask them if they want to participate. If they do, place a chair in front of them for additional balance. If they cannot participate, ask them if they have a stretch they want to do. If not, suggest a spine opening stretch, calf or ankle stretches.) As you inhale, lean forward slightly. Exhale, slowly lifting yourself off of the chair to a standing position focused on activating the large muscles in your legs. Taking an inhale as you stand and exhale slowly sitting back down. Let’s try this again together. Inhale, leaning forward and exhale, slowly coming up to a standing position. Inhale and exhale, finding your way back to your seat. Let’s do this for three more times staying connected to your breath to assist you as you move (pause for three breaths) inhale and exhale and you can either come back to sitting for the next few poses or, if you would like, you can remain standing to practice the next few poses if you’re going to remain standing. Let’s all move our chairs in front of us to assist us with balance (assist participants with moving their chairs).

Shoulder Opener

Next, a shoulder stretch. Inhale, and as you exhale, reach your arms out to the sides, stretching them in opposite directions. Find a gentle stretch in the shoulders, the upper back and in the front of the chest. Inhale, and as you exhale, cross the elbows in front of you. With the left arm on top, place your right hand on your left shoulder and your left-hand on your right shoulder. This stretch opens up the back of our bodies. We will stay here for four deep breaths.
Movement/Exercises

Shoulder Opener (continued)

If you’re interested, as we explore this pose, inhale and reach the elbows up and exhaling, release them down. If that doesn’t feel good in the body, just breathe into the stillness of the pose three more deep breaths. (Pause for two breaths) Inhale, and on the next exhale, release the cross of the arms. Inhale, and again stretch the arms out in opposite directions. Inhale, and as you exhale, we’ll cross the elbows in front of the body again this time placing the right arm on top and the left arm underneath. Either holding the pose or adding some movement. whatever movement you choose, take a deep breath and inhale and exhale four deep breaths (Pause for three breathes). Inhale, and on the exhale, gently uncross the arms stretching them out one more time. Inhale and exhale, really pushing the palms and spreading the fingers wide. Feel the stretch from your hands to the shoulders. One more deep breath here. Inhale and exhale. Inhale and, as you exhale, gently release the arms down.

*For all standing poses please make sure that participants have their chairs, or a walker in front of them for balance support.

Side Stretch (Standing)

Now, we will come into a side stretch. (Explain the seated option first). If you are standing place the left hand on the chair to support yourself. On the inhale, we will reach the right arm up, feeling a stretch in the spine, and then reach the arm over and across the head, to find a stretch in the side of our bodies. (Point to the area) Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Three more breathes, opening up the side of your body. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale, and on our next exhale, reach both arms back up the ceiling. We are coming into this stretch on the other side and we will bring the right hand down, either just releasing, or maybe holding the side of the chair, whichever feels best in your body. Then we will reach the left arm up, feeling a stretch in the spine, and then reach the arm over and across the head, to find a stretch in the side of our bodies. (Point to the area) Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Three more breathes, opening up the side of your body. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. Inhale and on the exhale, reach both arms up, Big inhale, reaching the arms and then exhale, release. Take a resting breath, sitting in stillness. Inhale and exhale.
Movement/Exercises

Twist (Standing)

Now, we will come into a twist. (*Explain the seated option first*). If you are standing on the inhale bring the arms up and as we exhale, we will bring the left hand down to the right side of the chair, holding the chair. Gently releasing the right arm down. See if you can feel the twist in the torso, let the neck relax and just look in the same direction the chest is facing. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breathes. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. On the last inhale you can stay right where you are, if you are interested in gently stretching into the neck, inhale on and the exhale look towards your right shoulder, exhale, releasing back to center. Inhale on our next exhale reach both arms back up the ceiling. We will now move to the other side. Inhale, arms up and as we exhale, we will bring the right hand down, holding the left side of the chair. Gently releasing the left arm down. See if you can feel the twist in the torso, let the neck relax and just look in the same direction the chest is facing. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breathes. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. On the last inhale you can stay right where you are, if you are interested in gently stretching into the neck, inhale on and the exhale look towards your left shoulder, exhale, releasing back to center. Inhale and exhale, release the twist and come into a natural standing position.

Forward Fold (Standing)

Next, we will come into a forward hold. (*Explain the seated option first*). If you are standing, take a step back from your chair, inhale arms up and as you exhale, moving from the hips, releasing the upper body down. Place the hands on the chair for balance. You may have just moved slightly, fold as much as feels good in your body. Let the neck, jaw and face relax. Let’s take four breathes. Inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale, and one more breath here, inhale and exhale. On the last inhale you can stay right where you are, if you are interested in gently stretching into the neck, inhale on and the exhale look towards your left shoulder, exhale, releasing back to center. Inhale and exhale, release the twist and come into a natural standing position.

Ankle Stretch (Standing)

Moving down the body now coming to an ankle stretch. (*Explain the seated option first*). If you are standing hold onto the chair for balance, inhale and on the exhale extend the right leg out in front of you. Inhaling and exhaling slowly circling the ankle feeling into the range of movement of the ankle joint. Inhale and exhale, continue for three deep breathes. (*Pause for two breaths*) Inhale and on the exhale, reverse the movement, circling the ankle in the opposite direction. Three deep breathes. (*Pause for two breaths*) Inhale and on the exhale release the movement and the leg back down to the floor. We will now come to the other side.
**Movement/Exercise**

**Ankle Stretch (Standing) (Continued)**

inhale and on the exhale extend the left leg out in front of you. Inhaling and exhaling slowly circling the ankle feeling into the range of movement. Inhale and exhale, continue for three deep breathes. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale and on the exhale, reverse the movement, circling the ankle in the opposite direction. Three deep breaths. *(Pause for two breaths)* Inhale and on the exhale release the movement and the leg back down to the floor.

**Calf Stretch (Standing)**

Now coming into a stretch for the entire calf and ankle we will inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. *(Explain the seated option first)*. If you are standing hold onto the chair for balance, As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. And again. inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. And one more time together, inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. Now try it three times by yourself, moving with your breath and your body. *(Pause, but continue to model the movement.)* On the third breath, inhale and on the exhale lower the right foot to the floor. Now, the left leg, inhale and exhale extending the left leg out in front of us. As we inhale, point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. And again. inhale and exhale extending the left leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. And one more time together, inhale and exhale extending the right leg out in front of us. As we inhale point the toes away from the body and as we exhale point the toes back to the body inhale and exhale lowering the leg back down to the floor. Now try it three times by yourself, moving with your breath and your body. *(Pause, but continue to model the movement.)* On the third breath, inhale, and on the exhale lower the left foot to the floor. Take a resting breath, inhale and exhale.
**Movement/ Exercises**

**Star Stretch (Standing)**

With this next movement we will do a full body stretch. *(Explain the seated option first).* If you are standing, you may choose to hold the chair for balance and stretch one side at a time, or stretch body together if you feel steady in your balance. Gently point your feet a little wider, but still feeling balance and strong in the body. Inhale and exhale reaching the arms up and then out in opposite directions, stretching in the arms, as well as the chest and back. Or just stretch the right arm and right leg for three breaths, holding onto the chair with the left hand. Three deep breaths. Inhale, stretch, exhale, releasing tension. Either hold for three more times (pause for a breath), or come into the left side, holding onto the chair with the right hand. Inhale and on the exhale, three breaths. Inhale and exhale, release. Hold onto the chair if needed and bring the feet closer together.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Note: Before all breathing exercises, remind participants to stop if they experience chest pain discomfort or feel lightheaded. “All poses can be adapted, go at your own pace.”

Centering Breath

Let’s start by finding a comfortable sitting position. Bring your attention to your seat and your feet and see if you can feel a connection to these two places of grounding. If it feels comfortable for you to do so, you can close your eyes. If not, just lowering your gaze down to the floor and everybody soften the space around their eyes to see if you can soften your jaw and the face. We will slowly come into connection with the feeling of breath and our bodies chest maybe you haven’t overall global sense of breath. Also, it may be difficult to find the sensation of the breath, or you may experience tension in the chest. If you feel pain, please stop and let me know. If it is difficult to connection with the breath, that is ok, just continue to stay present with the experience in the body. We will stay here together for a few moments continuing to connect to the breath the inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale we will continue to take deep breaths for a few more moments (taking a pause) Cue breath awareness (Inhale, and Exhale… Inhaling and Exhaling). (Take a pause) Cue breath awareness, (Inhale, and Exhale… Inhaling and Exhaling).

Belly Breathing

We are going to practice belly breathing, also known as diaphragmatic breath, because we will engage the diaphragm which is a muscle right here (point to the diaphragm). This muscle helps us breathe and as we engage it we are able to take deep breaths. We will start by coming into a comfortable seated position. Bring your attention to your seat and your feet. See if you can feel a connection to these two places of grounding. If it feels comfortable for you to do so, you can close your eyes. If not, just lowering your gaze down to the floor, soften the space around the eyes seeing if you can soften your jaw and the face. We will bring our hands onto our bellies. As we breathe in, see if you can feel your belly gently pushing into your hands and as you exhale the belly, let the hands drop back down to the body. Inhaling, belly rising and exhaling, belly releasing. We will continue to do these for five more breaths. Although we don’t breath directly into the belly, engaging the belly helps us engage the diaphragm, which also helps take more controlled exhales. Either take five more breaths, or release your hands and come into a natural, uncontrolled breath. When the breathing in the body expands and evens out, it sends a message to the brain, which helps create relaxation. (Pause two breaths). If you are still practicing belly breathing, please release your hands and come back to your natural breath. Three deep breaths together, inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, inhale, and exhale. Ok, slowly lifting the gaze or opening the eyes. We will keep the connection to the breath as we come into movement exercises together.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

**Progressive Relaxation**

Next, we are going to do a progressive relaxation. This technique can help relax your mind and body. We will tense different parts of our body, holding for a few seconds and then releasing. You don’t have to strain to try hard to tense the muscle. Go at your own pace. If there is a muscle that hurts, please stop and check in with me, or just don’t tense that muscle. As we tense and relax the muscles our breath will be the main focus. We will start in a comfortable seated position. You can take a moment to move around and find a sense of comfort in the body. If it feels comfortable you can close your eyes, or just lower your gaze to floor. Everyone try to relax the eyes, relax the jaw. Bring your attention to the breath. Feeling the sensation in the nose, throat or chest, maybe you have a global sense of breath. Maybe the breath is illusive or hard to connect to, that is ok. Just keep the focus on the breath. Inhale, exhale. Take three breaths. Pause for three breaths. On the next inhale imagine you are gathering the tension in the body, as you release the exhale, image you are releasing the tension. Let’s do this three more times together. Inhale, gathering inner tension, exhale releasing tension. Inhale, gathering tension, exhale releasing tension. Keep your focus on the breath, let it be natural and unforced. We will move into tensing and releasing muscles in the body. Tense the muscles in the face, tense the mouth, jaw, eyes, entire face, maybe even tensing the neck, hold this. Pause for five breathes. Inhale, on the exhale release the tension. Focus on feeling the muscles of the face and neck relaxing. Three deep breaths. Moving to the hands and arms, make a fist with the hands, bring the hands into the shoulder, tensing the arms, bring the shoulders to the ears, hold. Pause for five breathes. Inhale, on the exhale release the tension. Focus on feeling in the muscles of the hands and arms relaxing. Three deep breaths. Now, we will bring our attention to the feet and legs. Curl the toes, try to tense your calves, your tights and your bottoms, hold. Pause for five breathes. Inhale, on the exhale release the tension. Focus on feeling the muscles of the feet, legs and bottom relaxing. Two deep breaths. Focus on feeling relaxation throughout our entire body. Inhale relaxation, exhale releasing tension. Inhale relaxation, exhale releasing tension. Two more times together. Inhale relaxation, exhale releasing tension. Inhale relaxation, exhale releasing tension.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is another practice that can support relaxation in our mind, body and breath. Guided imagery can be helpful on focusing on things that bring us relaxation, as well positive things and people in our lives. Start by closing your eyes. Let’s bring our attention to the breath. Start noticing the natural rhythm of your breath, inhale and exhale. Three deep breathes. (Pause). Focus the mind on a place that brings you relaxation. Maybe thinking back to the pictures that we looked at earlier. This may be a place you have been to before, or a picture you’ve seen, or maybe an imaginary place. There is no wrong way to do this exercise, picture a place that brings you joy and happiness. In your mind, picture all the different aspects to this place. Are there other people there? How are they? What the sights, smells, and sounds of this place. (Pause). Image yourself, feeling happy in this place. What does happiness and joy feel like in your body? (Pause). We will sit here for a few moments together, continue to image yourself feeling at peace, safe and happy, feeling relaxed in the mind, body and breath. Let’s take five deep breaths, continuing to focus on relaxation. (Pause). Inhale and on your exhale, gently open the eyes. Inhale and exhale, coming back into the room.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Breath Counting

For our breathing exercise today, we are going to practice breath counting. Counting our breath helps keep the mind focused, and we will try to make our exhales longer than our inhales. When we do this the breath sends a signal to the body that it is ok to relax. Let’s start by finding a comfortable sitting position. Bring your attention and connect to a sense of grounding, maybe in your feet or maybe in your seat? If it feels comfortable for you to do so, you can close your eyes. If not, just lowering your gaze down to the floor and everybody is softening the space around their eyes seeing if you can soften your jaw and the face. We will slowly come into connection with the feeling of breath in our chest. Maybe you haven’t experienced the overall global sense of breath. Also, it may be difficult to find the sensation of the breath, or you may experience tension in the chest. If you feel pain, please stop and let me know. If it is difficult to connect with, that is ok, just continue to stay present with the experience in the body. As we start to count the breath, just make my words your words, do not strain or alter your breath. On your next inhale say to yourself,” I am breathing in one, I am breathing out one. I am breathing in one, I am breathing out one. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out two. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out two. We will next try to lengthen our exhale. If you experience any discomfort just stay with the two to two count. On the next inhale I am breathing in two, I am breathing out three. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out three. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out three.” You can either stay here or if you would like to continue, on the next inhale say, “I am breathing in two, I am breathing out four. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out four. I am breathing in two, I am breathing out four.” Continue to do this on your own, for three more breaths. (Pause) For the next four breaths, come back to your natural breath, letting go of the exercise. Inhale, On the next exhale, slowly lift the gaze or open the eyes. We will keep the connection to the breath as we come into movement exercises together.

Alternate Nostril Breath

For our breathing exercise today, we are going to practice alternate nostril breath. This breathing exercise is often practiced in yoga. We will be using our hands, like this (fold in your three middle fingers to show the group. The pinky finger and thumb are still extended. Let the group explore this movement in their hands.) This exercise activates both sides of brain, and it is said to create relaxation while at the same time energizing you. Let’s start by finding a comfortable sitting position. Feel your spine long and your body strong.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Alternate Nostril Breath (continued)

Take a minute to open to all your senses. The smells in the air, the sensations in the body, sounds the room, maybe outside the room, connecting to the sense of sight. Moving out of the thoughts of the mind to the felt experiences in the body. Continue to sit here for a moment and be with the experiences of the senses. (Pause) Slowly we will let all of the come into connection with the breath, letting all of the other senses drop into the background, they will still be there, but the main focus is the breath. If it feels comfortable for you to do so you can close your eyes if not, just lowering your gaze down to the floor everybody softening the space around their eyes seeing if you can soften your jaw, the face. Slowly come into connection with the feeling of breath and our bodies chest maybe you haven’t overall global sense of breath. Also, it maybe difficult to find the sensation of the breath, or you may experience tension in the chest. If you feel pain, discomfort or lightheadedness, please stop and let me know. If it is difficult to connection with, that is ok, just continue to stay present with the experience in the body. We will take our hands, in the folded position we just went over, bring your right thumb to your right nostril, exhale the breath out, inhale, bring the pinky finger to the left nostril, breathing out the left side. Inhale through the left nostril, bring the thumb back to the right nostril, exhale the breath, inhale on the right side, and again, bring the pinky finger to the left nostril, exhaling and inhaling, we will continue to do this for four more breathes. Try to keep the breaths even and easeful. (Continue to modeling and monitor, after fourth breaths). On the next exhale, we will release the hands down. Take three breathes, falling back into our own natural breath. Inhale, and exhale, Inhale and exhale, inhale and on the next exhale opening the eyes or lifting the gaze and coming back into the room.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Self Love Mediation

The next exercise is to help create feeling of self love and self gratitude. This can be difficult because often in our society we focus on giving our kindness to other people, and we don’t focus on giving our kindness to ourselves. Like all of the exercises we are trying together, some may work better for you than others. I invite to try this exercise with an open mind and open heart. I encourage you to turn your attention to giving kindness to yourself. If it feels comfortable for you to do so, you can close your eyes. If not, just lowering your gaze down to the floor and everybody is softening the space around their eyes to see if you can soften your jaw and the face. We will slowly come into connection with the feeling of breath and our bodies chest maybe you haven’t overall global sense of breath. Also, it may be difficult to find the sensation of the breath, or you may experience tension in the chest. If you feel pain, please stop and let me know. If it is difficult to connection with the breath, that is ok, just continue to stay present with the experience in the body. I invite you to being your attention to your feet and your legs. Thanking your feet and legs for all of the support and strength then have provided you throughout our life. (Pause). Saying to yourself, thank you feet, thank you legs. Bring our attention to your belly, your chest and your back. This part of your body hold and protects your vital organs. Take a moment and thank your lungs and heart. You pain, your joys, all your life experiences have been supported by your breath, by the beating and loving of our heart. Saying to yourself, thank you heart, and lungs. Bringing your attention to your fingers, your hands and arms. This part of your body manifests your actions, serving yourself and others. Saying to yourself, Thank you hands and arms. Moving the attention to the face, feeling into the sensations of the neck, face and mind. This part of your body provides thoughts and expressions. Saying to yourself, thank you to your face, and your mind. Expand your awareness to include your whole body, feeling into the rising and falling of sensations throughout the body. Saying to yourself, Thank you body, for all you do. Thank you mind. Thank you breath. We will sit here for four more breaths, focus on positive thoughts of self, sending tenderness and love back to yourself. (Pause). Inhale and on your exhale, slowly open the eyes or life the gaze. Inhale and exhale.
Breath and Meditation Exercises

Tonglen

For our breathing exercise today, we are going to practice Tonglen. Tonglen is a practice of sending and receiving. We will focus on sending out negative emotions, thoughts and sensations and receiving love, kindness and happiness. Let’s start by finding a comfortable sitting position. Feel your spine long and your body strong. Take a minute to open to all your senses. The smells in the air, the sensations in the body, sounds the room, maybe outside the room, connecting to the sense of sight. Moving out of the thoughts of the minds to felt experiences in the body. Continue to sit here for a moment and be with the experiences of the senses. (Pause) Slowly we will let all of the come into connection with the breath, letting all of the senses drop into the background, they will still be there, but the main focus is the breath. If it feels comfortable for you to do so you can close your eyes is not just lowering your gaze down to the floor everybody softening the space around their eyes seeing if you can soften your jaw, the face. Slowly come into connection with the feeling of breath and our bodies chest maybe you haven’t overall global sense of breath. Also, it may be difficult to find the sensation of the breath, or you may experience tension in the chest. If you feel pain, please stop and let me know. If it is difficult to connection with, that is ok, just continue to stay present with the experience in the body. As you inhale gather up any feelings of discomfort, pain or suffering, and as you exhale releasing. Letting them go as simply as releasing the breath. On the release, focus on receiving positive emotions and thoughts. Let’s try this again together, again breathing in any discomfort aversion or suffering and as you exhale release this receiving joy happiness and peace. If you would like to continue on this way please feel free to do so this exercise can also help us except and transform the suffering of others if you would like on your inhale thinking of a loved one a friend or family member breathing in there suffering their discomfort or pain and as you exhale releasing sending them Joy happiness and peace we will do this again. Inhale thinking of a loved one a friend or family member breathing in there suffering their discomfort or pain and as you exhale releasing sending them Joy happiness and peace. Practicing this two more times on your own. (Pause for two breaths). Inhale and on the exhale releasing this exercise inhale and as you exhale either opening the eyes are lifting the gaze back up.
Relaxation Handout

Relaxation techniques can help the wellbeing of our mind, body and spirit. When we experience chronic tension, it can trigger the “fight or flight” response of our nervous system. In a state of “fight or flight” our blood pressure can rise. The heart rate can increase, and the breath can become shallow and hurried. All of these things are to protect ourselves from a threat. However, if we stay in this state, it can affect our health. Practicing relaxation can keep combat the negative effects of stress.

Exercises

- **Belly Breathing**
  Bring the attention to the breath, gently place the hands on the belly, as you inhale gently push the hands into the belly, as you exhale, let the belly drop back. Continue this exercise with natural unforced breath.

- **Progressive Relaxation**
  Focus on tensing different parts of the body, and then releasing them. Inhale, and as you exhale, release the tension of body.

- **Guided Imagery**
  Bring your attention to place or person that brings you feelings of joy. Inhale, and as you exhale, focus on feeling relaxation.

- **Additional Activities**
Fall Risk Prevention Handout

There are many different things we can do to prevent falls. This handout only includes some on the many strategies. If you have concerns about your balance or safety, please talk to your family, caregivers and doctor.

**Some things you can do.**

- **Exercise.** Stay active. Try activities that improve strength, balance coordination and flexibility, such as walking, yoga, tai chi, water aerobics and exercise equipment, like a stationary bike.

- **Around the house**-Keeping your house clutter free can reduce the risk of falling. This can include, removing throw rugs, or using non-slip mats in the bathroom. Good lighting in your house can also be helpful.

**Don’t be afraid to ask for help.**

- **Get regular eye exams.** Poor vision could affect your balance.

- **Make a list of your prescription and over the counter medications and supplements,** or bring them with you to your appointment. You can review them with your doctor for side effects or negative interactions that may increase you risk of falling.

- **If you have fallen before,** write down the details including when, where and how you fell. Be prepared to discuss instances when you lost your balance, details such as these may help your health providers identify specific fall prevention strategies.
Positive Thinking and Gratitude Handout

Our thoughts can be very powerful. They can affect the way we feel. Positive thoughts can create positive outlooks on life, make you feel happier, help you express kindness and reduce your stress level. The more we practice positive thinking the easier it can get. If you are experiencing continually negative thoughts and have difficulty creating positive thoughts, let people know. Talk to your friends, family, caregivers and healthcare providers (doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, and program aides). Gratitude lists are one strategy to foster positive thinking. Gratitude can include thinking of specific moments; such as “I’m grateful for sharing lunch with my friends yesterday”. It can also include thinking of larger things too, like, “I’m grateful for my family.”

List three specific moments or events from the previous week you are grateful for.
1. 
2. 
3. 

List three things you are grateful for today.
1. 
2. 
3. 

List three people you are grateful for.
1. 
2. 
3.
Mental Health Handout

Adapting and accepting changing roles and situations in life can be challenging. Throughout life we experience many transition. As well age we deal with changing roles, such as retirement or becoming a grandparent. We many also deal with the loss of a loved one, or our own illness. These are normal parts of life and it is important to develop skills and supports to navigate these situations. Experiencing sadness or grief is common. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression is not a normal part of aging, but it can be a common problem among elders. Some signs of depression can include

- Feeling hopeless or empty
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Thoughts of suicide

If you are experiencing these symptoms or are concerned you may have depression, let people know. Talk to your friends, family, caregivers and healthcare providers. Treatments can include talk therapy, movement and medications. Be a part of creating a treatment plan with your doctor.

Additional Resources

Humboldt Community Switchboard: Provides information and referral to services in Humboldt County (707) 441-1001 or 1-877-460-6000

National Alliance of Mental Illness: NAMI Humboldt (Humboldt Co. affiliate): Advocacy and support for family and loved ones (707) 444-1600

24-hour Crisis Counseling: Humboldt County Mental Health Branch Crisis Team: (707) 445-7715. National Hotline 1-(800) SUI-CIDE (784-2433) or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK

In Blackwater Woods
By Mary Oliver (American Primitive, 1983)

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.
Additional Resources:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
http://www.cdc.gov/
Resources to support older adults in remaining physical active.
http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/
Fall Risk Prevention resources for elders and their family members.
http://www.cdc.gov/features/olderamericans/

National Counsel on Aging
Resources to support elders, their families and caregivers in creating health and economic security.
https://www.ncoa.org/
A list of evidence-based physical activity programs, which have been proven to produce measurable health benefits for older adults.
https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/physical-activity/physical-activity-programs-for-older-adults/
Webinars and resources regarding behavioral health in older adults
https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/behavioral-health/older-americans-behavioral-health-series/

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Fall Risk Prevention Resources
http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/adultfalls.html

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
United States Government agency on medical research, provides up to date medical information.
www.nih.gov

Sit and Be Fit
Chair based physical exercise and other holistic health information
http://www.sitandbefit.org/blog/

UC San Diego Health: Center for Mindfulness
List of contemplative poems
http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/resources/Pages/poetry.aspx

U.S Department of Health and Human Services
United States government directory of online publications, clearinghouses, databases, web sites, and support and self-help groups, as well as the government agencies
www.healthfinder.gov
Strategies for Successful Aging

A 5-week class at the
Adult Day Health and Alzheimer’s
Services Program
Thursdays 10:30 am -11:30 am

The goals of this class will include the following:

- Mindfulness and breathing exercises
- Movement that is adaptable to all skill levels with a focus on fall risk prevention
- Self-management skills to support your total wellness
- Engage with peers in a supportive setting

Please call Anna for more information, or with any questions 707-616-9255.