

Connecting Generations through Intergenerational Programs and Music

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Abstract: Intergenerational programs offer the opportunity to facilitate cooperation, interaction and exchange between different generations through activity (Kaplan & Sanchez, 2014). In this edition's music and healing column, I have chosen to write about these important programs in an effort to share and create awareness about their benefits, with a particular focus on music-based programs. A unique example of an Ontario program is highlighted, along with research-based suggestions on how to design and implement effective opportunities in your community.

Résumé: Les programmes intergénérationnels proposent des activités qui offrent la possibilité de favoriser la coopération, l'interaction et l'échange entre différentes générations (Kaplan et Sanchez, 2014). Dans cette édition de la rubrique Music and Healing, j'ai choisi de traiter de ces importants programmes dans l'optique de sensibiliser à leurs bienfaits, plus particulièrement ceux offerts par les programmes axés sur la musique. Cet article met de l'avant un programme offert en Ontario et suggère des moyens, issus de la recherche dans ce domaine, afin de créer efficacement ce genre d'occasions dans votre communauté.

Introduction

Intergenerational programs involve at least two different generations engaged in a structured activity together. Typically, this involves older adults and children. According to Belgrave “the types of clinical applications utilized in intergenerational programs often depend on the age and functioning of each generation and the model of intergenerational programming” (Sena Moore, 2012). These models include engaging in recreational activities, combined learning programs, and contexts in which one generation serves the other (Sena Moore, 2012).

Benefits of Intergenerational Programs



There are many potential benefits associated with intergenerational programs, in particular those linking younger and older generations. Simultaneously, while older adults benefit from improved health and wellbeing via participating in cognitive and physically simulating activities, adolescents realize positive changes in their behaviours, values and identities (Celdrán, Triadó, & Villar, 2009; Galbraith, Larkin, Moorhouse, & Oomen, 2015; Fujiwara, 2016; Sakurai, Yasunaga, & Murayama, 2016). Attitude change and improved interaction towards the opposite age group (Belgrave, 2011; Isaki & Haron, 2015) is fostered through these programs, while facilitating older adults to remain active as lifelong learners (Borrero, 2015; Park, 2015; Thompson & Weaver, 2016).

A recent systematic review of the success and efficacy of intergenerational programs found “programs with a greater number of empirically based interventions (EBI) controls have the greatest effectiveness, regardless of the intervention mode employed, and that this effectiveness is also modulated by other variables such as the participants’ disabilities, their literacy level, or their membership in an organization (Canedo-Garcia, Garcia-Sanchez, & Pacheco-Sanz, 2017). Another review of intergenerational programs was carried out with a focus on preschool and elementary children participating in activities with older adults. Out of the 27 studies reviewed, ten showed a positive influence on the children’s perception of the older adults; as well as the mood, self-esteem, and health and wellbeing of older adults (Gualano, Voglino, Bert, Thomas, Camussi & Siliquini’s, 2018).

Intergenerational Music Programs

Intergenerational music programs exist and you are probably aware of some in your community or province; however few people have written about them and/or researched their efficacy. I am also guilty of this. When I worked as the program coordinator in an Adult Day Centre with older adults who had various health and wellness concerns, I actively included