Using Experiential Techniques with Older Adults

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“... the need to play is not a trivial or childish pursuit but remains a powerful, positive force throughout our lives” (Schaefer, 2003, p. ix)
Play = Experiential

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Tool for addressing cognitive, behavioral, emotional challenges in a way that helps clients better process their experiences and develop more effective strategies for managing their worlds (“Parents Corner”, n.d.)
Language Bias

“...we don’t realize that many behaviors we do as adults frequently are not seen as play behavior when they really are play at its best. Among these are making art, making love, and making spirit.” (Caldwell, 2003, p.304)
Activity

Grab 2 minis and find a partner!

Together with your partner, create a story that incorporates all of the figures.
Important Pieces of Play Therapy

- **Facilitates Communication**
  - Self expression
  - Access to the unconscious
  - Direct teaching
  - Indirect teaching

- **Fosters Emotional Wellness**
  - Catharsis
  - Abreaction
  - Positive emotions
  - Counterconditioning fears
  - Stress inoculation
  - Stress management

- **Increases Personal Strengths**
  - Creative problem solving
  - Resiliency
  - Moral development
  - Accelerated psychological development
  - Self-regulation
  - Self-esteem

- **Enhances Social Relationships**
  - Therapeutic relationship
  - Attachment
  - Social competence
  - Empathy

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Peabody & Schaefer (2019)
“... older adults need to maintain intergenerational relationships to limit feelings of depression, and research has suggested that art activities improve the well-being of older adults” (Johannsen, 2019, p. 43)
In the final stage of Erikson’s developmental model, older adults are seeking to reach a level of wisdom instead of disdain.

Older adults tend to seek counseling and similar services for help navigating health concerns, loss of control, and relationships.
Activity

Create a timeline of the events that led to you being here today. You can start at any point in your life and include as much or as little as you prefer.
Activity

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One word activity

Select one word or phrase that describes why you’re here today. In your groups, create an image that addresses everyone’s word or phrase. Feel free to use words, pictures, or symbols.


