

Intergenerational Horticultural Program

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Key words: Intergeneration, Horticultural Program.

Abstract

An Intergenerational Horticultural Program in a rural community in Korea was tried out to enhance social interaction between elderly citizens and children, to promote the positive self-esteem of the elderly in a rural community, to change the attitude of children towards the elderly, and to create a rural community full of vitality. The clients were 20 elderly (60-80 years old) and 40 preschool children (6-7 years old). The activities in this program included seed of hope, round autumn garden, dish garden, in the vegetable patch, flower decoration for the Chuseok Festival, rainbow flower basket, heart card, fragrance of love, and a kimchi party. The results were a decrease in depression among the elderly from 44.0% to 33.7%. General satisfaction among the elderly was 100%. The desire to rejoin among the elderly was 100%. General satisfaction among the children was 100%. The desire to rejoin among the children was 93.5%.

Introduction

'Intergenerational' means 'a community of different generations,' and this community is composed of unrelated elders and children creating intimate relationships. Intergenerational programs have the goal to help elders and children transcend their differences and form harmonious relationships. This kind of intergenerational community education has a premise that although each generation has different characteristics with its time and experience, they have a common understanding from the fact that they are all related as part of a life, and that they can better understand life experiences as they act together in a community. When diverse generations or age groups come together in a community for an educational purpose, each generation can experience time and space that they do not know, and learn new things from each other. Intergenerational horticultural therapy programs can increase people's physical, emotional and mental health. The participating elders and children are allowed to use their senses while observing and touching plants. This provides positive effects on physical and mental health. Furthermore, it provides a feeling of achievement and confidence to both individuals and groups.

Materials and methods

Composition of group

The main participants are elderly citizens and children. The elderly should be aged 60-80, without much difficulty in communicating and moving about. Children should be aged 6-7, without much difficulty in communication and actions. Yet, individual registration is not easy, so it is advisable to advertise in units of villages and kindergartens. Twenty elders from Kyunggi-Province, Hwaseong-si, Munhak 1-Li, and

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twenty children from Jeongnam Kindergarten in Hwaseong-si participated in this program.

Activity site and period

This program took place in the Munhak 1-Li community office and nearby gardens from early August to mid-November of 2006 once a week and one hour for each session.

Effects analysis

The Korean Form of Geriatric Depression Scale (KFGD) was used to check the elderly citizens' depression change. General satisfaction among the elderly, children, and children's parents were surveyed.

Program schedule

The horticultural activities in the program consisted of the seeding, growing, and harvesting of vegetables and flowers which grow well after August. The main crops were Korean cabbage and radish for kimchi and short-term vegetables such as leek and lettuce. The main activities were planned to guide the participants to harvest and utilize the crops they worked on. Especially, the first activity was 'Sowing Seeds of Hope', and just like the name, we tried to connect the seeding activity with expectation and hope for the horticultural program. Also, the finishing activities like 'Scent of Mind', 'Greetings from Hearts', and 'Kimchi Party' were planned to imply the end of the program and let the participants apply the therapeutic result they gained from the programs. The activities between growing plants, such as 'Circular Autumn Garden', 'Plate Gardens', 'Rainbow Flower Basket', and 'Decorating the Village Hall' helped the participants have artistic and educational experiences. These activities also encouraged conversation among family members through the activity outcomes. Therefore, all the activities were planned to attribute the achievement of the program's objectives through connection of the activities focused on natural cultivation (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Program schedule of intergenerational horticultural program

Session	Date	Title
Orientation	8/9	Introduction and Pre-test
1	8/16	Sowing Seeds of Hope
2	8/30	Circular Autumn Garden
3	9/13	In the Garden
4	9/27	Rainbow Flower Basket
5	10/18	Flowers in the Field
6	11/1	Scent of Mind
7	11/15	Kimchi Party
Evaluation	11/22	Feedback and Post-test

Results

Tab. 2: Effect of the intergenerational horticultural program on depression among the elderly participants

Item	Pre-test	Post-test
Depression (Rate)	13.2/30 (44.0%)	10.1/30 (33.7%)

This intergenerational horticultural program was an interesting experience for the elderly. They enjoyed this program very much. Elders could have fun and see themselves as productive beings. Depression among the elderly was decreased from 44.0% to 33.7% (Tab. 2).

Tab. 3: Responses of elderly, children, and children’s parents about intergenerational horticultural program

Item	Elderly (%)	Children (%)	Children’s Parents (%)
General satisfaction	100	100	100
Desire for rejoining	100	93.5	100

Regarding the question, “How do you feel about the horticulture program?” most of the children said that they had good time and wanted to participate in this program more. It was verified that 100% of the children’s parents also would like to allow their child to join another program like this. They found that their child became interested in plants and flowers, and this program was very helpful for the child’s balanced diet and desirable attitude. General satisfaction among the elderly, children, and children’s parents were 100%, and the desire for rejoining among the elderly and children’s parents were 100%, and among the children was 93.5% (Tab. 3).

Discussion

We could confirm that the *Intergenerational Horticultural Program* provided some important roles to the elderly and to the children.

We suppose that this Intergeneration Horticultural Program has the following effects on the elderly. The elderly continually use their brains through horticultural activities. As they use both long-term and short-term memory during horticultural activities, they can feel confident about their abilities again. The elderly regain their confidence little by little through horticultural activities. As they watch the seeds they sowed become beautiful plants, they can feel satisfied. The elderly can transfer knowledge and wisdom to younger generations through intergenerational horticultural activities. Finally, the elderly can easily fall into depression or lethargy from thinking that they are useless, but through intergenerational transfer of what they have, they can regain self-esteem. We can conclude that horticultural activities are leisure activities that can be done over the entire lifetime. Through activities that can be easily done in secure places, the elderly can have fun and see themselves as productive beings.

We also suppose that this Intergeneration Horticultural Program has the following effects on the children. Children learn how plants and nature are beneficial to humans through horticultural activities. They learn wisdom of the elderly through the activities. Horticulture becomes the ideal medium for connecting generations. Children learn responsibility, nurture, and duty through horticultural activities. Also, they experience life, death, hope, patience and beauty. Lastly, children learn the continuity of life through the life cycle of plants. Through the series of activities such as sowing seeds, harvesting, and cooking the vegetables with the elders, children can learn about the cycle of life and the continuity of life.

Conclusions

The Intergenerational Horticultural Program decreased the elderly's depression from 44.0% to 33.7%. General satisfaction among the elderly, children, and children's parents were 100%. The desire for rejoining among the elderly and children's parents were 100%, and among the children was 93.5%.

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