



WELLNESS REPORT 2023:

LEVEL ONE

Learning HOW to Age®

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Level One

The Level One lesson plan is 20 lessons: ten weeks, twice a week for one hour each lesson. Completion of the Introductory Level is required. Assessments occur on the eleventh, twenty-first and thirtieth lessons. Level One offers the opportunity for group discussion and to work through exercises in detail. Since participants are required to have completed the Introductory Level class, concepts, exercises, and a common language have been established. This will allow for a richer experience and understanding of this wellness approach.

MENTAL FLEXIBILITY METHODOLOGY

Participants

- Members of Adult Ministry for Seniors at St. Paul United Methodist Church
- Average age of a participant was 81.28 years
- Make up of the class was 57% male and 42% female
- Participants met twice a week from 2022-2024

Class Requirements

- Participation limited to 65 years and above
- Class ratio 10:1
- Level One class met 2 times per week, 60-75 minutes per class

Classroom Preparation

- When standing in a circle for group exercises, chairs are to be placed behind each participant for safety.
- While standing is preferred, sitting is an option if needed.
- The classroom should be an open space clear of obstacles.
- Class size of 6-10 participants is ideal.

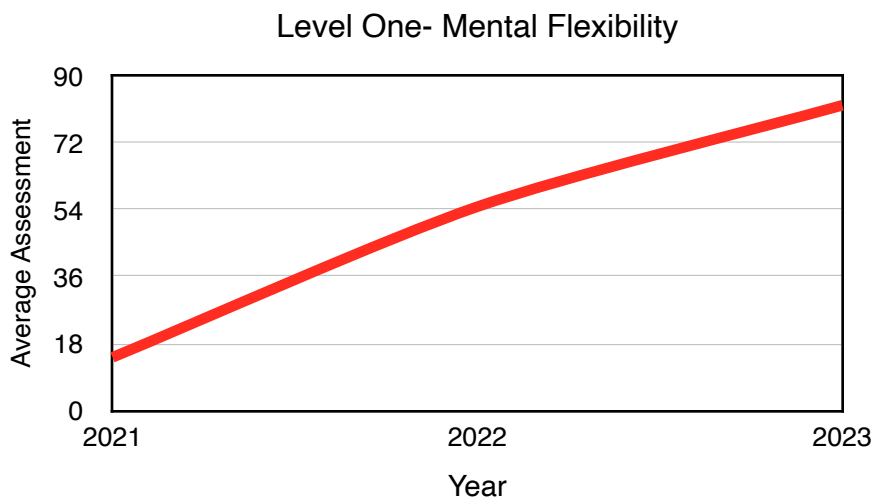
Mental Flexibility Assessment: Ball Toss 1.4

- Begin Assessment with the first 4 cognitive loads in place.
- If there is difficulty, begin to back out the cognitive loads in reverse. It is important not to assume participants will not experience overload simply because they had been introduced to an increase previously. You want to assess them at the most advanced level in which they are successful.
- Note observations in the assessment.

SUMMARY MENTAL FLEXIBILITY

With the introduction of each cognitive load, a regression occurs followed by a strong rebounding effect catapulting the participant beyond what was expected. This “sudden” improvement became a regular occurrence. As mental and physical energy is taken up with a new task, even old tasks that have been integrated successfully are momentarily discarded. When the assessment captures the “discarded” moment, the score is necessarily low. However, when the previously discarded task is combined with the new (which happens quickly when participants are reminded by the facilitator) a surge in ability is reflected in the assessment score.

By the last practice, this group was able to hold three verses in their minds (Galatians 6:2, Psalm 118:24, Joshua 24:15), alternating verses spontaneously when cued by a facilitator.



2022-2023 saw an increase in mental flexibility of 39.86%.

Recommendations

Mental flexibility exercises practiced in a group should be included in any cognitive activity for older adults. Working in a small group remains the preferred approach for this program.

The value of a small group versus an isolated setting cannot be underestimated. Re-establishing conditions for this kind of participation is necessary for this cohort to thrive.

Meeting twice per week encourages retention and helps to establish familiarity among participants. As the program progresses, participants are encouraged to take skills learned into their everyday lives and keep a journal of the results.

II KINESTHETIC AWARENESS METHODOLOGY

Participants

- Members of Adult Ministry for Seniors at St. Paul United Methodist Church
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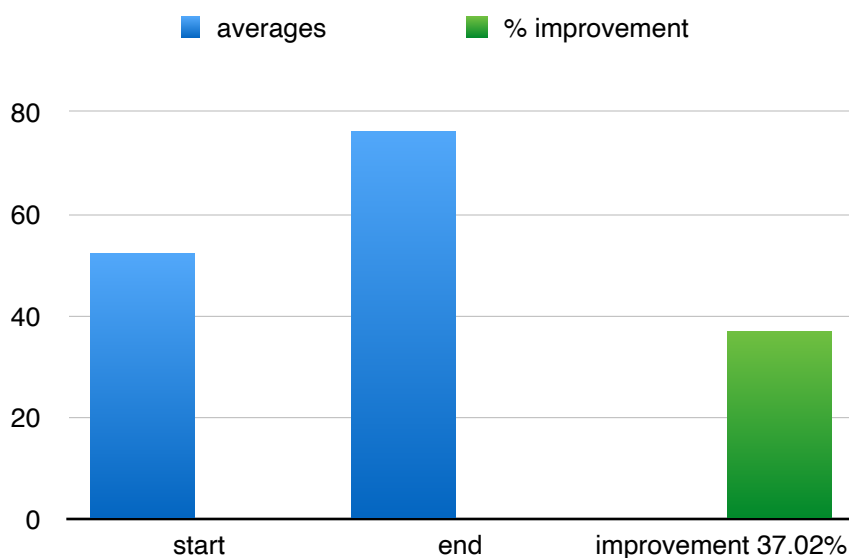
Kinesthetic Awareness Assessment: Coordination/Flow 2.3

- Participants stand or sit in a neutral position.
- Give participants 30-60 seconds to work on their own while assessing the current skill level.
- A detailed video demonstrating this exercise is available under the subscriber only tab at

learntoage.org.

SUMMARY KINESTHETIC AWARENESS

A greater sensitivity to structural alignment of joints and muscles creates confidence in choices of movement. Adjusting movement based on how it feels is necessary to protect vulnerable joints as we age. A 37% increase in awareness in this area is significant. As the lessons progress from a 3 step movement (Coordination/Flow) to a 12 step movement (Moving Meditation), participants begin to move safely and efficiently even as the movement pattern becomes more complex. As less time is needed to correct alignment, more time can be spent on advanced concepts such as flow.



Recommendations

A chair for balance should always be accessible. As the participants strength and awareness improve there may be less dependence on an external device. This is a positive outcome, an improvement, and some participants will begin to neglect securing a chair before beginning. But

setting the example by positioning a chair before starting and using one when needed (demonstrating a movement slowly, repeating transitions, etc.) is a practical, common sense solution. Participants must begin to discern what assistance is available and use any that is needed but not more. Just because a chair is available doesn't mean they should depend on it 100% of the time. But being able to lightly touch a stable object when needed and release it when not needed is the beginning of establishing autonomy and agency insuring participants can age in place.

III PHYSICAL PERCEPTION METHODOLOGY

Participants

- Members of Adult Ministry for Seniors at St. Paul United Methodist Church
- Average age of a participant was 81.28 years
- Make up of the class was 57% male and 42% female
- Participants met twice a week from 2022-2024

Class Requirements

- Participation limited to 65 years and above
- Class ratio 10:1
- Level One class met 2 times per week, 60-75 minutes per class

Classroom Preparation

Facilitator marks a distance from point A to point B.

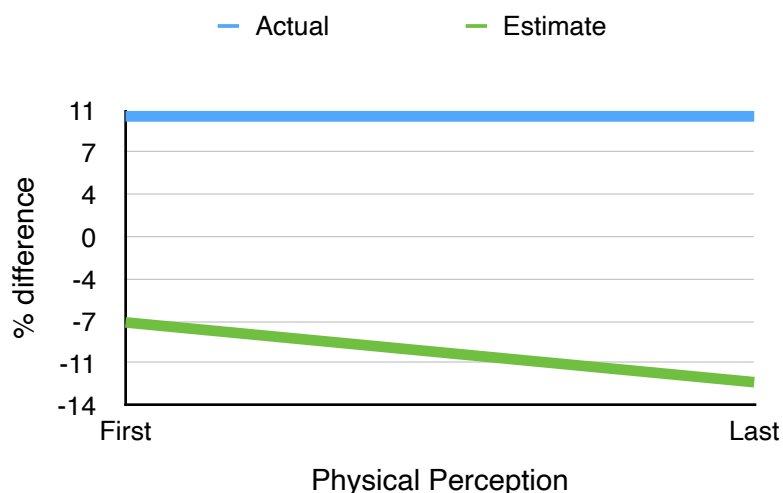
Physical Perception Assessment

- This assessment is done individually.
- Participant estimates the number of steps he/she believes it will take them to walk from point A to point B.

- Facilitator notes the estimate.
- Participant chooses a memorized passage (Pledge of Allegiance, The Lords Prayer, etc.) to recite aloud while walking from A to B.
- When the facilitator signals “start”, the participant begins to walk the distance from point A to point B while speaking the passage aloud.
- Facilitator counts participants actual number of steps taken.User
- Facilitator logs the actual number of steps taken.
- Repeat for each participant.
- The difference between the participants estimated number of steps and their actual number of steps determines the participant’s level of perception.

SUMMARY PHYSICAL PERCEPTION

Physical perception focuses on aligning perceived physical ability with actual ability in the external environment. The groups awareness improved anecdotally. My attempt to statistically demonstrate their improvement was not immediately fruitful. The physical perception assessment does not reflect my observations or anecdotal reports. That is my ignorance of statistical analysis, not the participants lack of improvement. For instance, if the same path each time they were assessed had been used, it would likely have shown positive data. But that would have been more an indication of their ability to practice a predetermined path, rather than improvement in actual physical perception. My thought is that alignment of the estimated number of steps and the actual number of steps will objectively demonstrate improvement in physical perception. The comparison below has data from only two assessments. For that reason, this report relies on the data I collected, and my observations, and self-reporting .I observed improved posture, less arm tension, and improved visual focus. Participants reported paying closer attention to their environment when moving from one location to another and incorporating physical perception exercises into their daily lives.



Recommendations

My theory is that as the participant's estimated steps align with the actual number of steps taken, the more aware the participant is of their physical presence and capabilities in their current environment, whatever that environment is. Gaze, Blocking, Spatial Awareness and Physical Perception Practice are exercises developed to improve this external awareness. These exercises combined with the kinesthetic awareness exercises which focus on an internal awareness all work together to improve mind/body awareness and should be part of a wellness practice. Continue to assess physical perception with the estimate/actual model. Collecting an estimate/actual comparison will prove beneficial to participants. A participant remarked that the number of steps it took her to cover a repeated path had decreased—same distance, fewer steps. That anecdote reveals a natural expansion of her gate, a very positive outcome. However, “expanding your gate” is not a stated goal due to safety concerns. That her gate expanded naturally and she was aware of it is a happy outcome.

SUMMARY LEVEL ONE

A continuing practice after the Introductory Level solidifies concepts, fine tunes awareness, and builds a social network based on trust, exploration and enjoyment. Level One of Learning HOW to Age® forms “wellness” habits that will replace old “illness” habits. These benefits extend to the facilitators and staff trained in this approach as well. A few of the Level Two exercises introduced in Level One are: an introduction to improvisation, Recall, Semantic Fluency, and Stair-Stepping practice. These exercises require participants to complete the Introductory Level and Level One consecutively. While there may be a participant who wishes to participate at a more advanced level, it is unwise to insert a participant into an established group. However, there are always exceptions and this is a suggestion not a rule. Eliciting the existing groups input is respectful and may provide an opportunity for a participant to take on the role of “mentor” to the new participant.