

TURKEY

CASE STUDY N°9

PAPER B

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WHY NOT TRY? / IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO ...

One common barrier that prevents the elderly from exercising is that they think their health is not good enough to start exercising, and may believe exercising will do more harm than good. Their poor health and the pain related holds them back from exercising. Moreover, seniors have a tendency to think they are too old to start exercising. So, they should begin by completing programmes that contain exercises to strengthen muscles, balance, endurance and mobility.

The first step should be to assess their coordination capacity through a coordination test, e.g. by moving a soda can with their dominant hand from a square to the next, first with thumbs up, then backwards with thumbs down.

That done, seniors should move to breathing, coordination and balance exercises. Suggestion: marching in different ways – with knees held high or legs totally straight, going straight ahead, sideways, backwards, while varying the arms movement, with engaging music, to enhance the experience. Exercises that are good to improve balance functions include: standing on one foot, walking in circles, sideways or over obstacles.

Subsequently, they should evolve to mind and body exercises, like “Catch the balloon”: Stand in a circle. Toss a balloon in the air and call someone’s name. That person must catch the balloon before it touches the ground. If the person succeeds he/she then tosses the balloon up and calls the next name; next step, “Balloon Bop”: now the balloon is not caught but kept in the air. As well as calling out someone’s name, also call out a body part which that person has to use to keep the balloon in the air until he/she calls another person’s name and body part.

In addition, they could play bowling, “pétanque”, fishing, go dancing or even practise basic yoga or tai chi.

Finally, when they have exercised long enough to see physical results, the elderly could embark on regular walks in irregular ground (preferably while answering quizzes based on what they can observe, also training their minds), animal or plant observation and registry, cycling, etc., always wearing comfortable clothes and shoes. Whatever the chosen exercising programme, self-regulatory skills, including goal setting and self-monitoring of progress are important to keep seniors motivated.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS: MATERIAL / PLACE / TIME

Material: Tape, soda can, bowling, fishing and “pétanque” games, yoga rug, hi-fi equipment, chairs, notebooks, pens, pencils.

Place: Indoors or outdoors facilities: day care centres, municipality facilities, gardens, parks, woods.

Time: Whenever seniors start feeling muscle weakness, imbalance and a tendency for immobility.

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES

Absence of trained and willing staff. Pain, muscle soreness, fear of falling, long period of time before outcomes are noticed.

ILLUSTRATION

