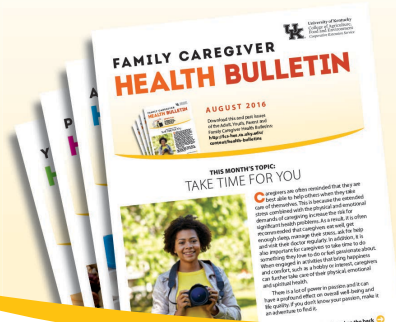


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



JUNE 2017

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<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

DISABILITY, AGE AND DEMENTIA SIMULATIONS



Simulation experiences promote disability awareness and can provide valuable insights into living with a disability, typical age-related sensory and mobility decline and even dementia.

A simulation will allow you to:

- Experience the environment of a person with a disability and the physical requirements necessary for accomplishing tasks basic to community and everyday living
- Examine personal actions and reactions to impairment and compromised independence
- Increase sensitivity and empathy with the physical, emotional and environmental experiences of persons with disabilities
- Consider the truths and myths of disability and old age
- Identify and understand ability through disability
- Develop effective communication and practice skills to help others experiencing impairment

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In a simulation, you experience the environment of a person with a disability and the requirements for accomplishing basic tasks.

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Many disability and aging simulations will temporarily impair the sensory and motor systems. Each impairment is followed up with a series of tasks. Some simulations will even introduce a variety of adaptive equipment to help you better understand ways in which the environment and various technologies can contribute to independence, safety and life quality.

- **Vision impairment** uses goggles that help a wearer experience conditions such as yellowing of the lens, cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and retinopathy. With these goggles, you may be asked to write a letter, look up a telephone number or find a way through a hallway.
- **Hearing impairment** uses ear plugs or wax to dull the sounds of people talking. Hard-of-hearing (and seeing lips to lip read), you will be asked to complete a simple task.
- **Speech impairment** uses a combination of ear plugs and/or talking with marshmallows in one's mouth. With different pitched voices and speed, you will be asked to have a conversation or complete a word list.
- **Touch impairment** uses plastic gloves or liquid bandages to dull the sensation on your fingertips. You might be asked to tie a shoe or unbutton a button.
- **Taste and smell impairment** is often simulated together. Cotton is usually inserted into the nose and you are then asked to identify various tastes and smells.
- **Mobility and balance impairment** is tested with wheelchairs, walkers and canes and

Simulations can help increase sensitivity and empathy with the physical, emotional and environmental experiences of persons with disabilities.

ill-fitting shoes. Dexterity can be further challenged by simulating paralysis or a missing limb with the use of bandages or tape to partially disrupt the function of a finger or fingers, joint, leg or arm. Wooden craft sticks can even be inserted into the fingers of the plastic gloves to represent stiffening joints and/or pain caused by arthritis. Impaired, you may be asked to carry your purse, navigate hallways and even cross a street.

The Second Wind Dreams, Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) is an evidenced-based program that was created to help families learn about their loved one's mental and physical challenges associated with dementia so that they can make the necessary changes to be a better caregiver. This program was written specifically for caregiving families. The tour includes many of the above simulation features in addition to CDs that play various white noise, strobe lights and specific tasks.

Each simulation should be followed by a discussion or debriefing so that you do not walk away from the experience feeling sorry and helpless. Rather, you should feel better informed and empowered. You will discuss the behaviors commonly associated with each impairment and ways that you can highlight ability through disability, adapt the environment and be a better caregiver.

For more information about disability and dementia simulations near you, contact your local County Extension Agent.

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- RAAD (Raising Awareness about Disabilities). University of Kentucky FCS Extension Program.
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. (2017). Aging Simulation: Sensitizing People to the Process of Aging. Retrieved April 18, 2017 from <http://fcs.tamu.edu/files/2015/06/aging-simulation.pdf>
- Virtual Dementia Tour. Retrieved April 18, 2017 from <http://www.secondwind.org/virtual-dementia-tour>

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Written by: Amy Hosier, Ph.D.
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

