

Therapeutic Recreation Protocol: A Bit of China

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Overview

This activity includes physical, cognitive, social, and sensory components. It has three segments: tai chi, tea asing, and Chinese horoscopes. Depending on a participant's care plan, this activity may be charted as physical, cognitive, social or sensory.

General Purpose

- Promote health by engaging in physical movement
- Improve mood through meditative and breathing exercises integrated with physical movement
- Improve and maintain cognition through novelty and surprise
- Engage the senses through opportunities to taste, smell and hear
- Engage in a social atmosphere

Populations

Targeted primarily at mid- to high-functioning participants

Materials Needed

- Calm music, Chinese music, or nature sounds as background for tai-chi
- Music player
- Hot water to make tea
- Several tea pots with tea balls for loose tea or large pot and one large tea ball
- Loose tea (jasmine, oolong, green or other Chinese tea)
- Tea cups or styrofoam cups (a real tea cup and saucer are required for a tea leaf reading)
- Ladle to serve tea if tea pots are not used
- Printed copies of Chinese Zodiac for each participant
- Simple Chinese cultural materials such as chopsticks, "training" chopsticks for kids, a Chinese cup and saucer, a jade item, Chinese symbols for upbeat concepts like health, happiness, harmony, and tranquility
- Sugar or artificial sweetener if participants' request it for tea
- Chinese cookies or other novel Chinese snack or fruit (note that fortune cookies are an invention of the 20th century by Japanese Americans and may not be the best choice)
- Napkins or paper towels
- Hand sanitizer
- Plastic gloves for handling tea and Chinese cookies
- White board and dry erase markers

Setting Up the Environment

This activity has three components: tai chi, tea, and Chinese horoscopes. Participants need to be seated in a semi-circle with ample space to move arms for tai chi. For the tea experience and Chinese horoscopes, some residents may need a tray table or to be repositioned at tables so that they can set their cups and cookies down and also more easily view the printed materials.

Contraindicated Criteria

Participants with limited arm and hand abilities may need assistance.

Cautions

Know participants' allergies and diet restrictions. This activity may use items that contain caffeine or herbs (tea); sugar, nuts, or dairy (cookies).

Activity

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Introduce activity by showing items from China to encourage them to guess the theme of the activity and ask them to contribute what they know about China. Consider using simple Chinese cultural materials such as chopsticks, “training” chopsticks for kids, a Chinese cup and saucer, a jade item, Chinese symbols for upbeat concepts like health, happiness, harmony, and tranquility.

Since China is a large country with a long history and rich culture, we are focusing on a small bit of Chinese culture.

Prepare for Tea Segment

Tea will be served at the end of the tai chi segment, but the tea needs to steep during the tai chi segment.

Jasmine tea is a good choice and can be found in loose leaf form in canisters at ethnic markets. Jasmine tea is very mild and participants should be encouraged to taste it without sweetener.

Ask participants to smell the tea and describe what they smell and if they like it. Sprinkle some tea leaves in a participants’ palms and describe how it looks and feels. Ask them if they have ever heard of jasmine tea.

What is jasmine? Explain how jasmine tea is made.

How do we usually buy or make tea? Explain that in addition to tea bags, tea can be made with the tea leaves directly in the water or by using a tea ball. Show a tea ball.

Ask residents to help spoon the loose leaf tea into the tea ball.

Place the tea ball in a large tea pot or in a large pot. Pour water over the tea ball for best results. Let the tea steep during the tai chi segment.

Jasmine tea is made of green tea leaves that have been scented with jasmine flowers. At night, when the pleasant fragrance of jasmine flowers is at its strongest, the flowers are placed on the green tea leaves to scent them.

Jasmine has been used traditionally in aromatherapy for its soothing effects. A study published in the "European Journal of Applied Physiology" in 2005 found that a compound in jasmine tea called linalool produces a sedative effect when inhaled.

Besides the aromatherapeutic benefits of jasmine, the green tea leaves in jasmine tea offer health benefits. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, green tea may promote liver health by protecting it from damage by toxins. The caffeine and compounds called catechins found in green tea can assist in weight loss by boosting your metabolism. The antioxidants in green tea may even reduce your risk of cancer. A study published in a Chinese journal, "Zhonghua Liuxingbingxue Zazhi," in 2004 found that regular tea drinking is associated with a lower risk of stroke. (Source livestrong.com)

Tai Chi Segment

Explain that in China and in China towns across the United States and Canada, it is not uncommon to see groups of people practicing tai chi. Does anyone know what tai chi is?

Tai chi is a Chinese martial art (like kung fu) that has become a stylized, meditative exercise, characterized by methodically slow circular and stretching movements and positions of bodily balance.

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The benefits of tai chi include calmer mood, increased blood flow, better balance, and more.

From Harvard Women's Health Watch

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi>

Tai chi is often described as “meditation in motion,” but it might well be called “medication in motion.” There is growing evidence that this mind-body practice, which originated in China as a martial art, has value in treating or preventing many health problems. And you can get started even if you aren't in top shape or the best of health.

In this low-impact, slow-motion exercise, you go without pausing through a series of motions named for animal actions — for example, “white crane spreads its wings” — or martial arts moves, such as “box both ears.” As you move, you breathe deeply and naturally, focusing your attention — as in some kinds of meditation — on your bodily sensations. Tai chi differs from other types of exercise in several respects. The movements are usually circular and never forced, the muscles are relaxed rather than tensed, the joints are not fully extended or bent, and connective tissues are not stretched. Tai chi can be easily adapted for anyone, from the most fit to people confined to wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

Lead 20-25 minutes of tai chi exercises. Play calm music, Chinese music, or nature sounds as background. It helps to have taken several regular tai chi classes to imprint the philosophy and types of movements. Certification in Chair Chi is available through workshops around the country. Youtube has a number of videos showing tai chi performed in a sitting position. DVDs are also available. These links may be helpful.

Chair Chi Certification with Pat Griffith

<http://chairchi.com>

Standing Tai Chi With Posture Names (Useful to give you a foundation of true tai chi)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUG8oMkV6p4>

Chair Tai Chi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjjqlImkI5Q>

Consider your participants and their abilities and feel free to do the actions (also called forms) in a different order than in traditional tai chi. Choose actions with names that may resonate with your participants. For instance, the action Punch and Ward Off, rooted in the martial arts history of tai chi, may appeal more to male residents. The names of the actions can also inspire grace and slow gentle movements. The point is to engage residents in slow, meditative movement for a sustained 20-25 minutes.

Always give participants a default action at the beginning of the activity so that less-motivated or less able-bodied participants can be involved and pause if they cannot do all the actions. . Tell participants that if they only do one action during the activity, this default action is it. A good default action is Hold the Ball or Hold the Moon. Do each action four times very slowly and then always transition to the next action by doing four sets (two times on each side) of Hold the Ball.

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In a calm but clear voice so as not to intrude on the meditative component of tai chi, announce the actions. The actions (also called forms) are often metaphorical such as Grasp the Peacock's Tail or Carry the Tiger to the Mountain or descriptive (from martial arts moves) such as Punch and Ward Off.

Tea Segment

Serve tea encouraging residents to taste it without sweetener and distribute Chinese cookies. Have residents share their opinions about the tea. What does it taste like, smell like, look like? Is it too hot or too cool? Ask similar sensory questions about the cookies. Take a poll to determine if more people like the tea or dislike it. Offer more tea to those who would like it. Take a poll to see if they like the cookies.

Chinese Zodiac Segments

Ask participants if they follow their horoscopes. Ask participants if they know their zodiac sign (such as Pisces, Aries, etc.). In China, they have a different zodiac based on twelve different animals. Each year is designated as the year of a particular animal. For example, the year 2015 is the year of the sheep (or goat) and 2016 is the year of the monkey.

Explain that animals have different associations in other cultures. For instance, we may think the bat is a scary, dangerous creature. But in China, the bat is a symbol of luck and happiness.

On a white board, list the animals of the Chinese zodiac and ask participants to describe qualities and associations with each animal. Write their input on the white board.

Distribute the page of Chinese zodiac signs. Ask them to figure out their Chinese sign by using their birth year. Assist participants as necessary. Have each participant announce their Chinese sign to the group.

Go through each Chinese zodiac sign according to our western perception of the animal as written on the white board. Then read the qualities of that animal in the Chinese zodiac. Note how different two cultures perceive the same thing. Ask the group if those qualities seem right for the people who were born in the year of the sign. Here is a sample interaction that will help create a fun social atmosphere, involve many people, and make participants feel good about themselves.

Leo and Ida are both born under the sign of the rabbit. What qualities did we say rabbits have? Marvin, can you read what we wrote on the white board about rabbits? That's right. You said that rabbits are fluffy, warm, sweet, fast and have a lot of babies. Marva, do you think Leo is fluffy and sweet? How about Ida? Phyllis, do you think that Ida is fluffy and sweet? Well, let's see what the Chinese zodiac says about rabbits. They say that people born in the year of the rabbit are gentle, quiet, clever, elegant, alert, polite, patient, persistent, but prone to melancholy.

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James, does that sound like Leo? Is he polite and patient? Does that sound like Ida? Who can tell me something about Ida that fits one of those qualities?

Some participants may not feel comfortable giving their birth year. Include these participants by having others detail that person's qualities then choose the Chinese sign that seems most like the person.

Participants get to keep the Chinese zodiac page. Encourage participants to help others who did not attend the activity or staff members to find out their Chinese zodiac sign.

Ideas for Extending the Activity

Lunar New Year: Research lunar new year. Discuss why lunar new year does not start on January 1. Which countries celebrate lunar new year? How many people worldwide celebrate lunar new year? How is it celebrated and for how long?

What Are the Different Kinds of Tea: Research where tea is grown, how it is harvested and processed to make green tea, black tea, white tea and scented teas . Discuss research confirming benefits of drinking tea.

Read Tea Leaves: Use the Reading Tea Leaves handout