

Creating closer connections

Building intergenerational relationships to improve health and wellbeing



The new face of  + 

Staying connected with families and communities becomes more important as we age.

With social isolation a growing problem for older people, there are some simple ways to build connections that benefit everyone.

Benefits of intergenerational connection

Having a strong social network and meaningful social interactions improves health and well-being and even protects against cognitive decline. Unfortunately for many people, as they age their social network becomes smaller. With families often moving away for work or study, many older people can find themselves feeling lonely and socially isolated, whether they live at home or in a residential community.

Fostering healthy intergenerational relationships is one way to reduce social isolation while also recreating the connections between generations. Creating real opportunities to talk and do activities together is also one of the most powerful ways to break down ageist attitudes and negative ideas around ageing.

Whether you are building relationships at home or in a more structured setting, social connection and learning together are the most important ingredients. This means everybody plays an active role and everyone has the chance to learn from each other.

Structured programs

Programs like play groups that bring older and younger people together regularly are most beneficial. Activities like art and craft, cooking, singing, dance and games promote active engagement.

The idea is to ensure that each person contributes in a meaningful way, whether it's in pairs or large groups, playing tea parties or gardening. It's the social interaction that motivates people and helps make meaningful connections that can become strong relationships over time.

The important bits

- Intergenerational activities connect children and older people through shared learning and purposeful activities.
- Intergenerational connections improve physical and mental health in older people creating a sense of purpose and belonging. They benefit children by helping them to develop communication skills, confidence and positive attitudes to older people and ageing.
- Social connection and learning together are the most important ingredients, whether you are at home or in a structured setting.
- By reconnecting the generations, we can create a more inclusive and age-friendly society.

Building bonds at home

Building intergenerational bonds can happen at home too. Holiday times are an excellent opportunity to make a start. For older people, learning is mostly about re-learning things they haven't done for some time or applying existing knowledge in a new way. Ideas to try at home include:

- Try digging out those old recipes and cooking up an old family favourite with a young person. This can bring back happy memories which can be shared, and young people can help with new kitchen appliances or finding recipes online etc.
- Try getting outside. Digging in the garden and planting flowers or vegetables can be fun for everyone and gives opportunity to keep working together as you watch them grow.
- Do some crafts. Try working together to make decorations for the festive table or making home-made gifts together.
- Do a jigsaw puzzle together.
- With young children playing dress-ups, reading stories or singing and dancing can encourage creative storytelling, reminiscing, and physical activity. Try teaching each other a song or a dance.

Opportunities to become involved

Intergenerational programs and playgroups are currently offered in Bolton Clarke communities including Fairview at Pinjarra Hills, Brisbane and Macquarie View at Bolton Point, NSW. Researchers from the Bolton Clarke Research Institute will be involved in some collaborative research projects to evaluate programs and develop a sustainable model that can be adopted more widely throughout the organisation.

Bolton Clarke also works with One Good Street to build neighbourhoods that support older people and reduce social isolation. You can find out more [here](#).

About Bolton Clarke

Bolton Clarke is the new face of RSL Care + RDNS. Together we have provided healthcare and aged care services for more than 200 years. We are one of the largest Australian owned and operated not-for-profit healthcare and independent living service providers, with a passion for ensuring our customers live the best possible life.

We provide reliable, trustworthy, quality care and support and living options across retirement living residential care and at home support.