Lose activities are defined as activities that require a level of choice to choose activities that are not required and involve a wide range of possibilities (Kilstra & Vlakamp, 2005). Current literature demonstrates the positive correlation between the provision of leisure activities and quality of life in individuals with intellectual disabilities. In fact, leisure activities are directly related to quality of life and life satisfaction (Reynolds-Kimbali & Goodwin, 2009, Wilson, Reid, & Green, 2006). Chung (2004) proposes that the need for meaningful occupations is innate relates to health and survival. Completion of leisure activities can even result in a sense of pride and a greater sense of self in this population (Reynolds, 2002). Creative activities can also foster sensory awareness, stimulate cognition, increase and social and motor growth (Reynolds, 2002). Engagement in meaningful activities is associated with increased independence in individuals with intellectual disabilities (Hansell, Elliott, Beadle-Brown, Ashman, & Macdonald, 2002). Finally, in-home leisure activity is the most important factor in individual’s overall leisure time quality (Wilson, Reid & Green, 2006).

Activity Examples

Activity: In-home Bowling

Benefits: This activity has many neuromotoric benefits. It promotes dynamic standing balance and upper extremity active range of motion. It supports crossing midline and visual motor integration. It can promote working memory and sequencing, as residents must remember the steps of play.

Ways to grade activity: To make activity easier, it can be completed in a seated position. The ball can be thrown with two hands versus one hand to grade this activity down. Finally, the staff can reset the activity if the residents are unable to complete this portion due to safety concerns.

Activity: Flower Arrangement

Benefits: This activity provides a creative outlet for the residents, which research demonstrates to have positive benefits, such as greater sense of self and increased independence. This activity supports fine motor coordination, as residents must pick up the flowers from the table in place to place. In the future, it promotes bilateral integration, as residents must stabilize the vase with one hand while placing the flowers in the vase.

Ways to grade activity: This activity can be graded down by having the women complete the activity in a seated position. The flowers can be placed further away to promote increased functional reach or closer to make the activity simpler.

Activity: Tabletop Gardening Activity

Benefits: This activity provides multisensory stimulation and supports multisensory processing. It supports fine motor coordination and AROM in the upper extremity. This activity provides bilateral integration and crossing midline functions. It provides a tangible outcome for individuals to take pride in, supporting self-esteem.

Ways to grade activity: This activity can be graded down by having the residents complete all tasks at the table. In a seated position. This could include planting the seeds and watering the plants.

Activity: Drum circle

Benefits: This activity promotes working memory and the execution of learned movement patterns. It supports neuromusculoskeletal functions such as joint AROM, bilateral integration, crossing midline, fine and gross motor control, and eye-hand coordination. Finally, it provides a creative outlet for the women to participate in freely, which can enhance sense of self and self esteem.

How to grade Activity: This activity can be completed in a standing or seated position. To make it more difficult, the staff can provide more challenging beats to follow. To make it easier, the staff can provide simple beats, with more verbal cues to allow the women to participate.

Activity: Sensory Bins

Benefits: This activity promotes multi-sensory stimulation, with the texture of the rice or beans and the different objects in the bins. This activity requires fine motor coordination and functional reach. It requires bilateral integration to stabilize the bin with one hand while searching for the object in the other.

How to grade activity: This activity can be graded up by having the individual look for certain objects, such as the ball or the animals.

Providing Care for Individuals with Dementia

Individuals with Down syndrome are at a high-risk for developing Alzheimer’s disease (Barnes, 2009). Providing dementia care in the home can be difficult for supported residential agencies, as they face challenges with lack of funding for additional staffing. Other issues arise such as lack of funding for necessary equipment can also pose problems for providing in-home dementia care (Barnes, 2009). Research provides tips for caring for these individuals in the home. A study by Chung (2004) also demonstrates the need for providing meaningful activities to promote overall independence and quality of life in individuals with dementia for as long as possible.