

Words of wisdom We count

Enablers notes



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We count

Making a difference with our unique skills and talents

Why this session is important

To help your group or individual to:

- Build their confidence and realise they have more skills than they think
- Identify the skills they love using and are good at
- Explore the different ways they can link these skills to make a difference to older people in their local community
- Understand the ways they can connect their skills with other people's strengths to make a difference together
- Agree an action to work on

What you will need

- We Count Activity for each group
- We Count Resources
- Paper/pens
- 30 minutes (depending on time availability)

How to do it

We Count is a fun, interactive activity exploring all the skills we have and may need in the future. Like learning a new language, this session is all about getting to know a new vocabulary of skills and becoming more confident about using them. These skills include leading, communicating, teamworking, problem solving, planning, budgeting, caring, listening, questioning, creating, researching, networking, reflecting to name but a few.

We count

Explain this activity is going to look at how we count by exploring and identifying the skills we love using and are really good at.

Introduce this activity by explaining that we have far more skills than we think, and these have been developed in and outside of education. We have gained them when we have joined clubs/societies and groups, volunteered in our local community, helped out at home, worked, and tried new things out.

While we may be good at certain things, we also grow to have a particular love of certain skills and talents. It can be different for different people – none of us are the same so for some people it may be listening and supporting friends, for others it may include creativity and art, making and doing practical things and yet for others it may be about being active and getting out and about to experience new things. This activity will help identify those skills we are good at and love using, and how they can be maximised through the SMILE challenge to make a difference to older people in our community.

Use the **Party Group Posters** (Resources) and place them around the room. Get individuals to imagine they are going to a party and as they enter the venue they are welcomed by 10 different groups. Each group loves engaging in a particular set of skills and talents.

Talk through each group in turn giving examples of their skills and talents. The **Me and My Skills Checklist** (Resources) will help with this.

Ask individuals which group they would like to join based on the one they have most in common with, would love to spend most time in and contribute to. Encourage them to get up and stand by their favourite, turn to one another and discuss why

they have chosen this particular group, what they already do to get engaged with this particular group of skills and how they may like to do even more of it.

Begin to bring the conversations to an end and explain that this group now has to leave so they must now identify what their second favourite group is and get them to move to it. Ask individuals to talk about how they can combine both sets of skills (their first and second choice) to make older people SMILE in their local community. Provide examples and perhaps seek to gain examples from the group too. **Giving in a Meaningful Way** (Resources) may also provide some useful prompts here.

Repeat the exercise moving individuals finally to their third favourite party group and ask whether anyone else has chosen their top three in the same priority order. Highlight that we all have a unique mix of skills.

Encourage individuals to record their top three groups of skills in order of importance and refer them to **Me and My Skills** to unpack their skills in more detail.

Explain that each group we belong to can work together in a combined way e.g. using any object in the room, for example if you took a single piece of paper, explore how each party group has played their part in bringing it to life. In this case the 'Handy-Andies' will have chopped down a tree and the 'Suits' will have sold the paper, the 'Greenies' will have planted new trees, 'Mathematicians' worked out the costs of production and sale, 'Actives' delivered the paper etc...

You may also wish to look creatively at how groups could work together with others; for example, you don't have to be a musician to organise a show for older people – 'Creatives' could design the set, 'Communicators' could invite and welcome people to the event, 'Suits' could persuade local businesses to sponsor the show, and 'Handy-Andies' and 'Carers' could set up the stage and organise refreshments on the day.

Encourage individuals to take a look at the groups they have selected and in **Me and My Skills** tick the skills they love and are good at.

Explain that the skills they have highlighted here can be used in a number of different ways. Encourage each group to discuss the combination

of their favourite skills and begin to explore how they can be combined to address the needs of older people in their community that they really care about.

Ask each group to creatively present what skills they love using and are good at as well as the needs of older people in their community they would like to address, for example loneliness, emotional wellbeing, health or financial hardship. Encourage every member of the group to participate in the presentation, particularly those who are less confident public speakers.

If you are able to invite parents, volunteers, or anybody else in your local community to get involved in the SMILE Challenge, ensure they have the opportunity to tell their story and demonstrate how they have developed skills that can be transferred throughout their lives.

Reinforce the point that the SMILE Challenge will be a great opportunity to not only build on the skills they love and are good at, but also develop skills that they would love to use in the future. For example, individuals could develop their 'Suits' 'Communicators' and 'Creatives' skills by getting out and about in their local community, and promoting, liaising and engaging with older members of the public. 'Carers' skills can be developed by simply listening to the needs of neighbours and 'Mathematicians' and 'Thinkers' skills by organising all the resources required etc...

What other questions to ask/points to make

- Again, be prepared to share some of your story if it's appropriate. Explain how your skills and interests overlap, and share any volunteering work you have undertaken
- Try to give examples of how you've developed your portfolio of skills both in work as well as your community and how you've used them to further your career and make a difference
- Consider how the 10 groups of skills are used to run your school/community group and how a wider community come together to support individuals; from the 'Handy-Andie' caretaker and 'Caring' cook to the 'Suits' and 'Communicators' who lead the organisation, 'Actives', 'Creatives' and

'Musicians' who coach sports, design fun activities and bring a bit of life to the day, as well as the 'Mathematicians' and 'Thinkers' who manage the funding and plan for the future. And finally the 'Greenies' who make sure everything is environmentally friendly. Everybody has their part to play!

As the session draws to a close discuss:

- What they may have learned, or what has surprised or puzzled them about doing these activities
- Help them to identify one key personal action they may wish to take as a result of doing these activities