

# **One Health Challenge Report**

Team 10

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# Together One Forever

A One-Health Challenge 2021 Project

**Mission Statement:** Creating social interaction between intergenerational groups using storytelling and collaboration to promote immuno-social health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus problems that were not prioritized pre-pandemic. One of these vulnerable sectors is the treatment of the senior adult population. Senior adult (aged 65+) mental health has been declining year after year. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association the prevalence of mental health problems in senior adults currently range between 17-30%, expected to increase upwards of 40% by 2030. To solve this crippling problem, it will take more than any one solution. What is needed is a multidisciplinary approach, with a solution that can be applied to multiple aspects of health. With this as a founding principle, we have created *Together One Forever*; a nonprofit virtual tool that connects individuals intergenerationally to utilize the power of storytelling in order to foster better social and immune health.

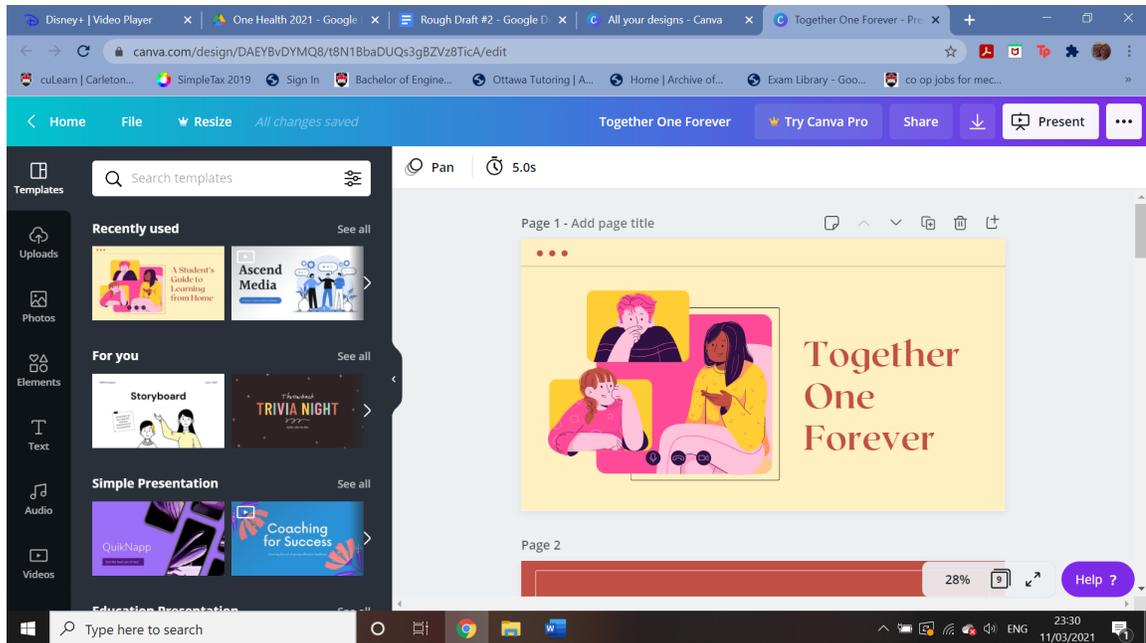
This project aims to connect groups of senior adults (65+), along with youth (18-30), through weekly interactive storytelling sessions in which a virtual workbook about senior's life and personal experience will be gradually created. Seniors will be prompted to revisit memories of their past and long forgotten thoughts that they will share with the younger participants. This experience will develop their connection and bond, fostering new ideas and learning experiences. The workbook that will result from the sessions will be valuable memories and learning experiences encompassed in an interactive scrapbook; One that seniors can enjoy themselves as well as share with their family members and friends. Memories of a lifetime, resurfaced through the power of cross-generational interactions.



## Activities

- *Together One Forever* is a web based, interactive and collaborative workshop that both the youth and elders will work on together on a daily or weekly basis.
- Create an account using their email address and then fill out a short questionnaire used to match people together. Some questions will be about age and language preferences.
- Elders will also have the option to be matched with someone who shares specific attributes with them such as cultural background or sexual identity.

- Pairs will be presented with a series of prompts that they will work on and share with one another.
- The website will have a chat box with an option to video chat. Over text, pictures can be shared and over video chat, a screen share option will be available to make the collaboration of the workbook easier.
- The Workbook will be created using Canva, a graphic design platform which is a premium option that allows to create templates that can be edited.



- *Together One Forever* will be registered as a nonprofit organisation and therefore can create templates for free and found on Canva.
- Using a shared email address, both the youth and elder will have access to the Workbook on Canva.
- Each workshop will run for 6 weeks. Barbara J. R. Mager and Lou Ann M. Stevens found that a short-term storytelling intervention shows a significant increase in happiness which is a step towards building resilience.
- At the end of the program, there is an option to get a hardcopy of the *Together One Forever* Workbook or video. The hardcopies will have to be bought and the videos will be free.
- To subsidize the price of the hardcopies *Together One Forever* will apply for the Inclusive Community Grant.
- As we transition into a post Covid-19 world, *Together One Forever* will adapt to these changes. Instead of holding all meetings between the youth and elder virtually, in person meetings will be arranged as well.

- We also look forward to eventually being able to offer translated versions of the finalized workbooks which would be available to seniors who do not speak the same language as their grandchildren and would like to pass down their story to them.

## Audience

- The targeted audience are elders and youth that will bond and connect to end the feeling of isolation.
- Ideas to get students involved include, giving them the option to get CCR credits, module/ activity that can be used in courses like social psychology, linguistics, bonus credits in courses like social science/ social work, and add it to their CV showing participation and involvement.
- *Together One Forever* is great for university students that are in sciences as many hope to get into med school, and this will provide them with the experience they need.
- This could be used as a treatment plan for elderly patients.
- Relevant for some indigenous communities, specifically those that pass down their knowledge through oral traditions and suffer from extremely high rates of mental issues.



## Buy-In

*Together One Forever* connects youth and elderly by providing them with additional support through this pandemic. When Covid-19 restrictions slowly start being lifted this platform will continue to be used in person rather than virtually, a real timeless program. The benefits of youth and elder being involved is as follows:

- Youth will benefit from accreditation, through CCR credits, letters of acknowledgement, and receive training in working with vulnerable populations.
- Elderly will benefit through sustained support and activities. In 2010, 40% of people that lived in the US age 65 or older were living alone; loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems such as depression or anxiety. With consistent meetings the feeling of isolation and loneliness can be prevented.
- In 2013, a non profit AGE UK implemented a pilot befriending program for elderly that are at high risk of being admitted to a hospital. The results showed that long term conditions dropped by 40% and local hospital admissions dropped by 30%.

- Intergenerational connection made easy for adolescents and the elderly. Basic technology and knowledge are the only requirements, which can be accessed remotely so almost anyone can participate.
- Storytelling will be the key ingredient in this recipe for success in that we will be providing matched groups with prompts to facilitate the process and keep the conversation going.

We are at a time where there is a major lack of social connectivity leading to higher rates of mental health issues and feeling of loneliness. Through this program we can help curb this effect. Post-covid, *Together One Forever* could be used as a therapeutic session at old age homes, where every week youth volunteers will visit and work on the workbook together.

## Resources

- We will need to invest in building a website which will cost between \$30,000 and 100,000 to build. Squarespace or Wix are a low budget option.
- Simplistic design to ensure greater usability and a layout that is easy to navigate.
- Staff: will need to hire at least 3 volunteers to manage the app and take care of HR, recruitment, training, tech maintenance and assistance, business, and marketing.
- Each participant will need to have access to a device with Internet access and a web-camera.
- Participants will also need to have an email address that they are willing to share to receive updates, and communicate with their match outside of meetings to record their progress.
- The senior can decide to enrol in the program with their grandchild or any other acquainted young person they have a pre-established bond with, or they can choose to use the website's pairing option to be assigned a match through the program.
- Promoting and advertising: contact care centers, hospitals, specialized mental health institutions, and post-secondary educational institutions to propose a partnership. In addition to targeting ads on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, radio, and television advertisements.
- Potential funding sources: government's established funding for ageing population, government grants such as the Inclusive Community Grant, bank loans, private investors, charity campaigns using platforms such as Crowdfunding and GoFundMe.



## Impact

With the creation of *Together One Forever*, our aim is to increase senior emotional support, health and happiness through the memorable interactions and their long-term effect generated in the program.

- Storytelling allows abstract thoughts and feeling to be linked in new ways, creating greater emotional processing ([Tamagawa](#), et al 2015) .
- The storyteller can have a catharsis, giving closure to past events and allowing for ownership over one's own life events (Gubrium, 2016).
- Resilience is a person's capability to adapt positivity to adverse conditions. It is a positive personality trait which facilitates a person's ability to adapt to new situations. It is extremely important as older adults who tend also to be happier and report better quality of life regardless of their actual health status. (Barbara J. R. Mager, 2015). The volunteers involved in the program will also learn valuable key life lessons by hearing the elders speak of their past experiences.

To measure the impact that our program will have on youth and senior participants we will implement a series of self-assessments that each participant would complete.

- One self-assessment would be administered before the program begins to gain a baseline, then another assessment would be done at the midpoint of the program (3 weeks), and a final assessment at the end of the program (6 weeks).
- Each of these assessments would take approximately 5-10 min to complete in order to get their feedback on their interactions with the youth and how they feel regarding their own resilience and mental health.
- We will know our program has created an impact by seeking a positive trend that would indicate that the program succeeded.
- *Together One Forever* will iterate and tinker the program from the feedback received.



Why is it important to involve the youth in this program as opposed to the seniors writing their own story with the prompts?

- The young participants are necessary for this project as it will give a greater sense of purpose to the elderly being actively engaged during the storytelling sessions as they pass down their life experiences.



- Intergenerational interactions may not have interacted otherwise, and so it will help create new essential connections to foster greater understanding and empathy between generations.

**Conclusion:** Older adults are more at risk of loneliness and social isolation. Through regular meetings with a youth partner and an actively engaging storytelling program, *Together One Forever* plans to help build bridges across generations as well as help the elderly relive some of their happiest life moments as well as get closure on their unresolved personal experiences; a practice that will lead them to strengthen their cognitive functions leading to a happier and more resilient life. Student volunteers can benefit from the program not only by gaining credit and meaningful resume experience, but also by developing empathy, active listening skills, gaining insight outside of their own demographic and even gain a better sense of direction in their own life. Overall, without this program, the culture would be missing out on an opportunity to create a fantastic inter-generational synergy.

## References

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