



Walking: An Intergenerational Recipe for Success

Any time is the perfect time for taking a walk. Walking is something everyone can enjoy – whether on their own feet or in a carriage or wheelchair – being outside enjoying, nature and fresh air can be invigorating. We want to help *you* with tips to plan an intergenerational walk in your community.

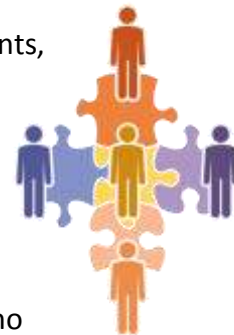
Step 1: Convene an IG leadership team with three to five representatives from at least one other organization.

Members may include senior center staff, teachers, volunteers, parents, and/or students. As a team, you will make decisions about your walk and who to partner with. Invite a physical therapist or trainer to come, join the fun and lead some warm-up exercises.

Look in your local paper to see if anyone is publicizing walks – so you can unite efforts.

Potential partners include:

- Public, charter and private schools – reach out to teachers who have contacted you, physical education teachers, guidance counselors who are helping students cultivate social skills, PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) leaders or sports' team coaches who are sometimes looking for community-based activities to do
- Homeschool groups – most families who homeschool belong to a regional organization that looks for ways to make learning come alive. A walk is a great way to do this!
- Local preschools, after school programs, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs or other community organizations – reach out to the director
- Family networks – many towns have a family network for people with at least one child under the age of 5. They coordinate events for families.
- Boy and Girl Scout troops – look for Scout leaders
- Councils on aging/ senior centers – Most towns have one. Reach out to the director or activities coordinator
- Ask older adults to invite grandchildren and other people in their circle of love.
- Senior housing or assisted living communities – reach out to the activities or wellness coordinator



- Collaboration with some community organizations offer unique opportunities for walks. For example, with a library, do a story walk (Read on in this article for details); Community gardens or conservation group could lead to a walk through property they support; local historical society could lead to a walk around historical places with stops to discuss.

Step 2: Meet to plan your IG program.

Decide how you will enhance your walk so that meaningful engagement occurs between generations. Read on for ideas.

- Establish a time line of what needs to be done like advertising, recruiting participants, alerting the media, getting permission for the route.
- Figure out a budget and secure funding. Consider sharing the costs across the leadership team's organizations or partner with local businesses. Remember to recognize and thank your donors in your program and public relations materials.
- Publicize your event in local papers, school news, and senior center newsletter.
- Plan your time together using our IG Recipe for Success.

1) Begin with an Ice Breaker Activity

Icebreakers are quick and easy activities used to help group participants relax and get to know one another. When participants talk about something familiar and easy, they begin to feel comfortable hearing their voice in a group. A successful icebreaker can set a positive tone for the rest of the event.

- **Option 1: Sharing in dyads.** Ask people to find a partner whom they do not know well, share their favorite place to walk, and why they decided to come on the walk today or if they could walk with any person in the word – living or deceased – who it would be and why.
- **Option 2: Scatter and gather.** The facilitator calls out a category, such as what type of footwear people are wearing. Each person calls out their response – and then gathers with people who have the same response. For example, everyone with sneakers forms one group, shoes another, sandals yet another. Have people introduce themselves to their group members. Then, call out another category, like favorite season to walk in or favorite place to walk. Do this for a few rounds.

2) Teach a mini-lesson about walking.

Walking has a so many benefits. The chain reaction that walking and exercise have upon your body is truly amazing!



- Our heart beats faster and brings blood with more oxygen to all parts of our body.
 - Our body produces a lubricating fluid to help our joints move more easily.
 - We burn calories, pulling from our carbohydrates and fat stores. We also burn excess insulin which is important for people with diabetes.
 - Our body temperature rises and our skin opens up to release the heat – which results in perspiration.
- Endorphins are released – which make us feel good and help release tension.

Share about the importance of stretching as a way to warm up muscles, increase flexibility and prevent injury. Lead the group in some simple stretches for hamstring (back of upper leg), calf (back of lower leg) and ankle. Many examples can be found online.

Step 3: Activity – The Walk

The one mile walk is the activity. Divide your walkers into multigenerational groups. Add some spice to the walk with some fun activities. A suggested list follows based on the multiple intelligences or smarts theory:

Picture Smart

- Make signs and banners to encourage participants and post them along the route.
- Make a map for people to follow. (Map-following is becoming a lost art.)



Nature Smart:

- Scavenger Hunt: Give each group a list of items to find on the walk and a bag in which to put them. Examples include a pinecone, leaf from a local tree, stone, etc.
- I Spy: Give people a list of 10 items to spy on their walk or a category of items and see if they can spy 10 different items in that category, such as trees, plants and birds.

Music Smart

- Make a playlist for the walk with Top Ten songs from the decades that will be represented by the participants' youth - 50s through 2016.

Body Smart

- Stop each quarter-, half- or whole mile and take your pulse.
- Doing the stretches before and after is body smart.

Logic Smart

- If a store in the area can donate pedometers, figure out how many steps the average person took to reach a mile. Did more steps equal faster finish time?
- Reviewing how the body works is logic smart.

Self-Smart

- Post questions along the route:
 - Do you feel like your body is working harder?
 - Do you feel warmer? Is it harder to catch your breath?
 - Do you feel more relaxed and less tense?
 - Where is your favorite place to walk?
 - How does walking make you feel?
 - Do you think people walk less or more than they did in the past? Why or why not?
 - Do you wish you could walk to work or to school? Why or why not?
 - Did you think you could incorporate a walk into your daily routine?
- Come up with a letter of commitment to yourself to make walking a bigger part of your life.
- Give people a chart to check off when they reach their walking goals. Remember: It takes 21 days to develop a habit!
- Offer a reward for those who reach their walking goals, via the letter of commitment and chart.

People Smart

- Post questions along the route for people to discuss. Our deck of Grand Conversation Cards has more than 40 to choose from and are designed to launch multigenerational discussions.
- Ask each participant how they felt after the walk. Put together the responses and send to participants after the walk to encourage them to keep walking.

Word Smart

- Put together a list of tips to keep people motivated to continue walking.
- Story book walk: Search online for a detailed explanation of Story Book Walks. In a nutshell, select a relevant picture book and then carefully cut out the pages, laminate them and post them along the route so people stop and read. This activity is fantastic for younger children.

Step 4: Summary Discussion

Ask people to discuss the following questions.

- What was your favorite part of the walk?
- What did you learn?
- What did you enjoy?
- Would you like to do an intergenerational walk again?
- Are you more likely to walk as a regular part of your routine?
- Did you think you could incorporate a walk into your daily routine?
- How do you feel now that you finished the walk?

Step 5: Reflection

- Lead a cool down with soft music.
- Do some deep breathing and share about the importance of deep breathing as a tool to bring oxygen to the body and quiet the mind and body.
- Ask people to sit comfortably for one minute, reflecting on the experience. Then ask people to reflect on how they want to exercise moving forward.

Step 6: Snack and Social Time



- Serve a snack and some cold drinks. This gives participants time to socialize informally.
- You might want to give out certificates and have fun old-fashioned games. (ring toss, sack race, etc.)
- Have some raffle items or door prizes.

*** Tips for recruiting older adults for the walk:

- Reach out to participants at the senior center, advertise in the newsletter and make announcements at all the different activities.
- Reach out to senior housing to advertise the walk.
- Make an effort to include people of all ability levels.
- Advertise at the library.
- Advertise in the local paper.
- Advertise at local physical therapy places.
- Advertise at assisted living facilities.
- Advertise at the YMCA or other community organizations.

*** Tips for recruiting young people for the walk:

- Reach out to the athletic directors or coaches at high school.
- Touch base with physical education teachers at all schools.
- Reach out to public, private, magnet or charter schools in your community.
- You may want to invite a trainer or physical therapist to do stretches or cool down exercises at the event.
- Recruit from high school sports teams and intramural programs.
- Ask P.E. and health teachers to include the walk for extra credit for their courses.
- Reach out to scouting organizations
- Advertise in the paper and local libraries
- Advertise on local school websites.



This Recipe for Intergenerational Success is sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging.