

***“Working with the Elderly”:* Sample Training Module from PHI**

The goal of this 3-hour module is to prepare participants to help elderly consumers cope with changes of aging. The module is structured to follow the adult learning cycle, as follows:

- *Experience:* An individual true/false survey addresses participants’ existing knowledge and attitudes about aging. (Participants keep their survey, which will be revisited at the end of the module.) Then participants answer questions anonymously about what they imagine their lives will be like when they are 80.
- *Reflection:* These anonymous responses are collected and then read aloud; participants are asked to describe each writer in positive terms and then guess which participant it is. This “reflection” phase is wrapped up by sharing a poem about some of the liberating aspects of aging.
- *Generalizing:* An interactive presentation covers the normal changes of aging – addressing some of the myths included in the true/false survey and some of the attitudes expressed in the “When I am 80” exercise. The “presentation” involves participants’ own experience and knowledge by making a game with teams competing to list the most changes.
- *Application/“New” Experience:* Pairs of participants rotate through stations that simulate some of the sensory changes of aging that they identified – e.g. sight, hearing, touch. While one participant experiences what those changes feel like, the other participant tries to help him or her do a simple task; then they switch roles. This application of what they have learned is also a new experience to reflect upon.
- *Reflection:* After all participants have rotated through all the stations, in large group discussion, participants share what they learned through this exercise, both from the perspective of the elderly person and the direct-care worker.
- *Generalizing/Application:* Again, two phases are combined. Working in small groups, participants are given a list of common conditions of aging that relate to one body system. First they identify the body system (*generalization*), and then suggest ways the direct-care worker can assist an elderly person to cope with these changes (*application*). They can use textbooks, handouts, and all the resources available to them. The groups then share their work with the other participants in the large group, with the trainer correcting or adding as necessary.
- *Generalizing/Reflection:* The module is completed with a review of the correct answers to the true/false survey on aging (*generalizing*). Then each participant is asked to share the most important thing they learned from this module (*reflection*).