Longevity in Action
have children in your life

# Facilitator Preparation (What You’ll Need)

* Have Children in Your Life worksheets
* Writing utensils
* A copy of Dr. Roger Landry’s *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging* (optional)
* A computer with Skype set up (possibly linked to large projection screen)\*
* Everything from your Kids Day Shopping List

# Session Content:

Please read this aloud:

A few reminders before we begin …

* Please be respectful to one another. Everyone in this room comes from a different background that has formulated who they are as a person and contributed to their unique opinions. As a group, we will observe *respect* as a guiding principle as we interact with one another. It is our goal that all participants feel valued, respected, and heard.
* Share without imposing your beliefs on others. Please refrain from convincing others to adopt your opinions.
* Keep an open mind. Our discussions will be thought-provoking and insightful. You may not agree with everything you hear, but please be willing to consider opinions that may be different from your own.

# Today’s Objectives:

Please share these objectives with participants.

* To understand the value of intergenerational connectedness.

# To discover opportunities where generations can connect in fun and meaningful ways.

# Opening Passage: Martin’s Mission

Read this excerpt from *Live Long, Die Short* aloud: Pages 171-175.

Martin is nearly ninety, a widower, and a retired aircraft company executive. He lives in a retirement community in Florida. He’s gregarious, and optimistic. He plays tennis regularly and attends the local university’s life- long-learning classes. As a single man in a community where women out- number men by as much as three to one, and where a major criterion for appeal is being able to drive at night, he’s a rock star. But despite all this he was feeling empty. His grandchildren were grown and he felt all he was doing was merely recreational, without purpose or meaning.

Martin was in charge of training for his company when he was still working, and had always harbored a dream of being a teacher. So, one day, on a whim, he walked over to the local elementary school and went to the guidance counselor’s office. He asked if there were any children who were struggling and whom he might be able to tutor. Luckily, the counselor was not closed-minded and paired him up with a struggling fifth grader, Brian. They began meeting once weekly at school and soon were meeting after school to enjoy a hot dog or go to a movie. Brian’s grades began to improve, and the counselor approached Martin about possibly seeing other students and asked whether there were more older adults who might be interested in helping students. And so was born the mentor program.

Once weekly, Martin and forty of his neighbors set up forty card tables in the dining room of their retirement community and wait for the school bus to arrive with forty students. They pair off and spend the next hour talking—about school, math, history, and life. The school reports that the students are doing better in their studies and that there is a marked reduc- tion in behavioral problems. Meanwhile, Martin and his neighbors spend a good part of the week preparing for the meeting. They are planning a big party for the last day of school, and many are going to meet with their young friends over the summer. Martin is happy. He has a bounce in his step, and has secretly started a bank account in Brian’s name, which he hopes will be used as tuition for college. He knows, of course, that he won’t be alive to see Brian in college, but he’s proud nonetheless of Brian and cherishes their friendship.

# Group Discussion

Please read this aloud:

(if necessary, please remind participantsto be respectful by limiting answers to less than a minute so that more people have time to share):

Question: Has anyone here had an experience such as the one Martin had? Can you briefly share your story with us?

Question: What value do you see in having children in your life (for yourself and for children)?

Question: How do you see connecting with children impacting your resilience?

# Group Activity: Mystery Skype in the Classroom!

Please read this aloud:

In *Live Long, Die Short*, Dr. Roger shares with us that we benefit from having children in our lives because they ease our stress, help us build resilience, and bring us more joy and meaning to our lives. Children, in turn, benefit from our wisdom and experience and enjoy being socially connected with us. Today, we’re going to take a few minutes to Skype with [Enter the name of elementary school, day care or day camp. It can be a local, national or international organization]. Here’s the fun part … they don’t know in what state we are located, and the children will be asking us questions to see if they can figure it out. Our job is to give them clues and answer their questions.

(Note to facilitator: There are lots of variations to this event. It can be as simple as one group Skyping with another group informally, or having participants Skype one-on-one with another student. Some organizations in the past have paired residents with young people overseas who are learning to speak English – so that they can practice conversation.)

(Optional) Group Activity: Kid’s Day Celebration!

Please read this aloud:

In *Live Long, Die Short*, Dr. Roger shares with us the many benefits of having kids in our lives. During the year, we typically celebrate Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, but rarely do we celebrate Kids Day! Today, we’ve invited the **[Name of school; Kindergarten/First Grade/Second Grade]** to visit us, so that we can celebrate Kids Day in a fun and meaningful way. They are arriving at **[Time]**, and we could use your assistance getting ready for them.

(Note to Facilitator: The options here are endless. We’ll outline some suggestions for your Kids Day Party. Then, it’s up to you to choose one or two events for the day. In general, the event will likely run about two to three hours at minimum. Some communities find it helpful to wrap up the day with a calming activity – such as watching a movie to wind down and relax – while enjoying juice and snacks. Another option would be to lead kids through a visualization exercise that encourages them to focus on their imagination and breath.

Alternatively, participants may decide to visit a school or library during one of their pre-planned kids events. Or, take this concept even further by hosting a day camp at your community for team members’ children! When selecting your events, you may want to consider what resources you already have within your organization. For example, do you have an art instructor who visits regularly who might be willing to lead a class, or someone from your dining team willing to assist in planning a healthy meal?)

Kid’s Day Event Ideas:

* Plan a cooking class and pair older adults with kids, having them work together to create a healthy meal.
* Host a gardening class where participants can work together to create an edible garden or create terrariums. (**Hint:** Tips for building a terrarium can be found here: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Terrarium>)
* Participate in an art project together, such as finger painting or puffy painting. (**Hint:** Ideas for art projects can be found here: <http://artfulparent.com/painting-activities-kids-60-ideas>)
* Play music (live or pre-recorded) for your own sing-a-long picking from popular children’s songs. (**Hint:** Here’s a link that includes a list of popular sing-a-long songs: <http://www.allmusic.com/album/100-sing-along-favorites-for-kids-mw0000697262>)
* Take a dance class together or have the participants teach a dance they know to the kids and vice versa.
* Tell stories! This can be as simple as breaking a large group into smaller groups and having a resident share a story from their childhood (or having a child share their story), or bringing an age-appropriate book to read to kids. Or, if they are learning to read, have them read to you!
* Host a scavenger hunt with teams of older adults and kids working together to complete their list. Even better, host a HUMAN scavenger hunt. (e.g. “Which person in our community is a three-time Olympic winner?” Ask questions to find out! Or, “Find the lady wearing the blue hat.”)
* Pair an older adult with a child. Have them draw a picture together that includes both of them, and that shows them each doing something they enjoy.
* Play BINGO together! Let kids take turns calling the letters! Perhaps pair residents with kids and set up teams.
* Watch a children’s movie at your community. Even better – watch a children’s movie together dressed as your favorite superhero or cartoon character. (Note to faciliator: This is best for the end of the day, so that kids can unwind before going home. Try to include at least one interactive activity before the movie.)
* Have residents teach children a skill such as sewing, tying a tie, knitting, drawing or another craft.
* Invite team members to bring their kids to work one day (or, visit a local school) and have residents talk to kids about aging stereotypes and asking challenging questions such as “What is old?” And, “Is aging only about decline?”

# Wrapping Up Today’s Session

Please read this aloud:

Thank you, everyone, for being here to share your time and your thoughts with each other. We look forward to many more insightful opportunities and discussions from *Live Long, Die Short* about building resilience. As a reminder, our next session is scheduled for [Day – Date – Time – Location]. Our topic is [Topic Name]. You are welcome and encouraged to bring a friend, but please RSVP for both of you. The sign-up sheet is located [Location]. Additionally, if you would like to assist with facilitating next week’s session or a future session, please let me know.

Before you go, please take a few minutes to write down a brief journal entry about today’s session. It can be anything from notes you’d like to remember or a personal initiative you might like to take. Before each entry, you’ll notice a couple of questions to think about, and you’ll have the opportunity to sum up this session in a simple word or phrase. Your journal is for your eyes only. Remember, I am always available to help answer any additional questions you may have about this journey.

*\* These materials are for OPTIONAL events.*