

Meeting Advancing Excellence Goals with The Eden Alternative®

Advancing Excellence Goal: Increase Resident Mobility

by Denise Hyde

Description & rationale: Enhancing and maintaining mobility as a part of daily care is important to maintain a person's physical and psychological well-being of older people. Immobility can result in complications in almost every body system, which can lead to further disability and illness. Working on this goal will help nursing home staff address mobility issues including walking, range of motion, transfer, use of restraints and prevention of falls. The result will improve the resident's health and quality of life with more freedom of movement and more activity.



How The Eden Alternative strengthens this goal: To enhance and maintain an Elder's mobility, her motivation to be mobile, in whatever way possible, has to be explored. Through the development of close, caring relationships, care partners are able to learn and sense what is meaningful to one another. Meaning encompasses more than just great physical health. It is the heart and soul of the person. It is simple pleasures and important relationships. It is the purpose for getting out of bed and being part of the world each day. The Eden Alternative Principles help organizations create a caring community rich in meaning, variety and spontaneity, and opportunities to apply the antidotes to the Three Plagues. When Elders find meaning in their home, beyond the receipt of medications and treatments, it drives their motivation to remain as mobile as possible. Care partners that understand the power of meaning and purpose are not only enhancing an Elder's mobility, they are also strengthening their well-being (identity, growth, autonomy, security, connectedness, meaning, and joy).

- Companionship (Principle Three) can be a powerful motivator to drive mobility. Close and caring relationships are at the heart of the Eden Alternative Philosophy. When care partners (Elder, employees, leaders, family members, and volunteers) truly know each other and care about each other, improving mobility becomes a natural part of these daily relationships. Care partners discover there is joy in time spent with an Elder who is living with frailty and keeping their muscles moving. This is no longer a task, but an opportunity to deepen the relationship, improve observation skills, and genuinely care for someone without expecting anything in return.
- Purpose and meaning (Principle Six) is life-saving. How is the Elder participating in daily events that are meaningful to her, that motivate her to remain strong and mobile? Where there is meaning and purpose in a person's life, there is motivation to be mobile, on your own or with assistance.
- Immobility can be a sign that helplessness has seeped into the Elder's life. Balancing opportunities to give as well as receive care (Principle Four) in the life of each Elder overcomes helplessness. This can be a powerful motivating force to enhance mobility. Growing the Human Habitat (Principle Two) creates an environment that is abundant in opportunities to give as well as receive care.
- The Eden Alternative teaches that care means helping another to grow (Principle Seven) and growth is built on strengths. When the care partner team observes, talks about, and documents, the strengths the Elder has, rather than focusing on their deficits (e.g. immobility), it becomes easier to engage them in enhancing and improving mobility for each Elder. Listen to the

language used, the assumptions made, and the personal beliefs that may be stunting the Elders growth and increasing their immobility.

- Surplus safety can contribute to an Elder's immobility. When care partners believe that the risk of mobility for an Elder outweighs the benefits, they can actually cause more immobility. Without the means to surface these fears and address them openly, it can be difficult to create a culture that enhances and maintains an individual's mobility. Use Learning Circles that engage the whole care partner team in uncovering these concerns and discussing them. Principle Seven teaches that genuine human caring (helping another to grow) should be the master, and treatment should be the servant in people's lives. When we care first, then we will do all we can to enhance mobility.
- In creating home (Principle Two), the care partner team should identify how the physical environment can enhance or diminish mobility. When great distances have to be traversed around the building in a short amount of time, mobility is diminished. When distance is shortened between the bed and the bathroom, or between where food is served and socializing is happening, it makes it easier to maintain mobility. Creating smallness within the larger living environment can be a powerful stimulator of enhanced mobility.
- Eden Registry Members share amazing stories of Elders regaining their mobility when daily life is happening close to their door. Some ideas include de-centralizing daily events, having meals served within their household or neighborhood, knocking down the nursing station to create a living room space for everyone to enjoy, having people cheer each other on as they walk to the dining room, or holding competitive cake walks around the home that involve Elders and employees together.
- In the Path to Mastery, all four Milestones include steps and tools that address how to bring meaning and choice to the meal experience for all care partners. This includes open access to foods of the Elders choosing 24 hours a day. There are steps about creating smallness within the environment and growing empowered care partner teams equipped to meet the Elders' needs. Nurturing fun and spontaneity, along with bringing meaning into the big and small events in daily life are captured in Milestones 2 and 3, along with steps about transforming the role of healthcare professionals to focus on strengths and enhance well-being.
- The Paradigm Busters Resource Packet, "The Role of the Therapist in Person-Directed Care" and "The Role of the Activity Professional in Person-Directed Care" offer insights on how to shift these roles to promote strengths, develop caring relationships, and enhance well-being.