

## **Folding Clothes**

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Self-care is a component of activities of daily living. Folding and hanging clothes are familiar to many older persons with dementia and represent abilities that may still be available, though they may not have the opportunity to display self-care skills in many home and institutional settings. The activity of folding clothes can enhance fine and gross motor skills, develop hand-eye coordination, and create a sense of order and independence.

### **MATERIALS**

- Two trays
- Three child-size pairs of pants
- Three child-size long-sleeve shirts



### **SETUP**

1. Lay the pants out flat, stacked on top of each other on the first tray.
2. On the second tray, set out the shirts in the same manner.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Demonstrate how to fold a pair of pants by first holding the pants up by the waist with both hands.
2. Fold the pants in half lengthwise and lay them down on the tray.
3. Show the participants how to fold the legs in half from top to bottom, and in half again.
4. Show the participants how the pants look when they are completely folded.
5. Invite the participants to try folding the pants. During the activity, start a conversation about clothes with the participants. Ask if the participants fold clothes or put them in drawers.
6. Ask if they would like to try to fold another.
7. Demonstrate folding the shirt for the participants.
8. Invite the participants to fold a shirt.
9. Invite the participants to assist in putting away the clothes when the activity is finished.

## EXTENSIONS

Try folding adult clothing, matching socks, sorting and folding laundry, or putting clothes away into drawers.

## HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Have participants fold washcloths, towels, sheets, or blankets.

## VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

### DOWNWARD EXTENSION:

Fold one part of a piece of clothing and let participants fold the other part, such as folding one sleeve of a shirt while the participants fold another.

Break down the task into separate steps and have participants complete the same one step for each piece of clothing while you finish the rest of the steps.

### UPWARD EXTENSION:

Folding paper can be used as an art project, such as making origami figures.

## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

**P:** The participants are having problems with the steps involved with folding a pair of pants or a shirt.

**S:** Isolate the step that the participants are having problems with and demonstrate the step. Have the participants try only that step with several pants or shirts.

**P:** The participants cannot determine where the neck of the shirt is due to vision problems.

**S:** Identify the neck for the participants. Let the participants try to identify it by touch and ask the participants how to complete the next step.

**P:** The participants cannot remember which step comes next.

**S:** Have the participants do one step at a time with each pair of pants or shirt, and guide them through pointing, demonstration, and verbal cueing.

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