

THE STORY OF CHOCOLATE – A FIVE SENSES EXPERIENCE!

Residents will learn about the cacao tree, the processing of chocolate and then participate in a chocolate tasting/sensory experience: they will try different varieties of chocolate, notice the colors, feel the textures, breathe in the aromas, and experience the different sensations on the tongue. The Eldergrow garden offers a therapeutic connection to nature where residents engage in meaningful ways with the garden – cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. **This activity can be done even if you don't have an Eldergrow garden, using a courtyard or window with a view of nature.**

Activity Objectives:

Objective 1: Resident will engage socialization (S)

Objective 2: Resident will engage sensory stimulation (SS)

Objective 3: Resident will engage cognitive stimulation (CS)

MATERIALS:



Note: Consider sugar free chocolate options or if you don't allow culinary or foodie type lessons, you may prefer that residents participate in our non-culinary backup lesson instead (on your Portal).

- A **variety of 3-4 chocolate bars** – ranging from dark chocolates to milk or white chocolate bars: (Trader Joe's has many interesting choices or Dollar Tree / Walmart) (Chocolate samples might include: Different % Dark, Milk, White, Belgian, Espresso, Mint, Swiss, etc. Do not use chocolate bars with pieces of nuts, extra salt, chewy or alcohol fillings. Avoid really high % dark (bitter) chocolate as it was disliked in test groups. Make sure you have enough for each resident to have a bite size sampling of at least 3-4 different kinds.)
- Cups of water or mint leaves (to cleanse palette between tastings)
- Paper towels, tongs & food handling gloves
- Print Chocolate **Tasting Notes**: (End of Lesson)
- Talking Points: "**The Story of Chocolate**"
- *Optional*: Watch Making Chocolate from Cacao Pods: [Link here](#) (Consider pausing video to explaining each step)
- *Optional*: Chocolate Flavor Wheel (Daily Programming)
- *Optional*: Warm Chocolate Milk to sip, or pudding, for soft-diet
- *Optional*: New **Chocolate Mint plant** (smell the 'chocolate' in it?)
- *Optional*: Game – Guess how many chocolate chips are in the jar!
- *Optional*: Play classical music in the background

PREPARATION:

- If you have a garden, have residents gather around it or at table by a window with a view of nature. Have journal ready for garden/nature observations.
- Set out materials and Talking Points to the side until ready to use.
- Jot down any memories that are evoked in the journal. Chocolate reminds folks of so many celebrations!

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS – CHOOSE 1 OR ALL 3 PARTS:

Eldergrow Lesson Plans are guides only. In order to maximize resident engagement, customize these plans to the various interests, cognitive levels and physical abilities of residents.

1. GARDEN OBSERVATIONS AND "SCRATCH & SNIFF" STIMULATION:

- Gather around the garden/window so residents can make nature observations for the garden journal.
- Ask if anyone recognizes a plant of the day, giving descriptive hints until it is identified. See if folks notice changes in the garden or outside. Ask someone to plant a new plant now or save it for the end of the lesson, along with other gardening tasks: watering, tiling the soil, sweeping the garden structure, etc.
- Do a "Scratch and Sniff" stimulation with herbs, like a chocolate mint plant. Ask: *Do you know what this plant is? Do you recognize its smell, leaf shape, texture, etc.? What does it remind you of?*

2. CONVERSATION STARTERS & TALKING POINTS:

- *Who likes chocolate? Who doesn't? Did you know it comes from a tree?* Today we are going to learn about chocolate, its health benefits, plant origin and how it's made. Then we'll have a chocolate sensory experience!
- Ask a volunteer(s) to read the Talking Points about the "The Story of Chocolate" aloud to the group.
- *Optional:* If you can use a large screen smart tv for a video, watch the short 5 minute video, "Making Chocolate from Fresh Cacao Pods": [Link here](#)

3. CHOCOLATE SENSORY/TASTING: STEP BY STEP DIRECTIONS

- Print Chocolate Tasting Notes for each resident (or one for everyone to share). Put on food handling gloves. Consider using tongs to help distribute chocolate pieces (so chocolate doesn't melt in your hands).
- Pour a cup of water for everyone or give them a few mint leaves to cleanse palettes between bites.
- Break bite sized chocolate pieces. (Some folks will need to be given one piece at a time to not get ahead of the group.) Starting with notes #1, everyone will take a piece and fill out their notes. Then move on to #2 and so on. Remember to take your time with each choice and savor each bite!

Take notes and discuss what everyone experiences after each step:

1. **CLEANSE YOUR PALATE:** Drink a sip of water to ensure that your taste buds are fresh between bites.
2. **LISTEN:** Break the piece in half if possible (or break away from the larger bar). If you hear a clean "snap," the chocolate is ready to eat. If you hear a dull "thud," the chocolate is likely too warm or was poorly tempered.
3. **TOUCH:** Run your fingers across the surface. Notice the texture, from smooth or bumpy.
4. **SMELL & TASTE:** (Only do smell for residents who don't like to eat chocolate) Aroma is an important component of flavor; noting the chocolate's profile will add another dimension to the tasting experience. (Refer to the "Chocolate Tasting Notes" for descriptive adjectives.) Place the chocolate on your tongue. Close your eyes. Let it melt slowly, allowing the cocoa butter to slowly coat your taste buds. After this, try chewing once or twice to further release the flavors. (Why? If you chew immediately, any astringencies or bitterness might overwhelm your palate.)
5. **EVALUATE (AND ENJOY):** Study how the aroma and flavor of the chocolate came together: bitter? sweet? light? heavy? Consider how these factors, along with the texture, evolve as the chocolate melts. And after the chocolate is gone, think of how the flavor lingers or if it has a quick finish.
6. **REPEAT!** Taste a variety of chocolate to discover the difference and find your favorites.

CLOSING & ACTIVITY AMENDMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

- Some folks who don't like chocolate or perhaps can't participate in the actual tasting may enjoy participating with their other senses (look, touch, smell, listen, and then evaluate). Folks who don't like dark or milk chocolate may prefer just tasting white chocolate candy (which has no cocoa powder or chocolate liquor).
- For **higher acuity folks or those with low vision**: Write with black sharpies to make large written labels on a piece of paper/paper plates to identify each of the types of chocolate and try one at a time.
- Higher acuity folks and those with **less fine motor skills**/lower vision, may need hand over/under hand assistance or have someone hold the chocolate under their nose as they breathe the aroma.
- Minimize confusion by offering higher acuity folks a choice of two options: *Is the chocolate sweet or a little bitter? Is it smooth or gritty?*
- Others with **mechanical soft food diets may prefer to participate by eating chocolate mousse or pudding**, so do provide alternative options so everyone can be included. They may prefer a cup of warm cocoa or mocha to drink instead.
- Higher functioning groups may enjoy more than 3-4 varieties of chocolate! Or making their own simple desert afterward using their favorite option.
- Assist as minimally as possible to the particular resident's ability. This way it's a collaboration that plays to the resident's strengths, allowing them to be successful and fulfilled with the work they can do! It is helpful to have a staff member work with that particular resident, doing gardening tasks together so they are still included and supported.
- **Changes in the garden or outside areas can help stimulate short term memories**, so do encourage residents to make garden observations as well as reflect back on previous observations so they can see how their garden is changing over time. Some people like to write a "plant of the day" on a chalkboard or piece of paper for residents to read about in the future (and to use when creating the plant labels). Some may enjoy looking at a pressing book of previous cuttings to see all of the different plants that have lived in the garden.
- Assist residents with walkers or wheelchairs to the Eldergrow garden or outside/to a window to make observations, and tend to the plants. Or take a bowl of pruned plant parts for a resident to explore!
- Some residents prefer to only assist with gross motor garden care instead of participating in the lesson. One may enjoy hand tilling the soil or adding new soil around the plants. Someone else may like to water each plant to the count of three or dust off the shelves and garden structure.
- Give everyone a round of happy applause for a job well done! Laughter and joy are what we are encouraging with all of our Eldergrow projects!

CHOCOLATE SENSORY/TASTING: STEP BY STEP DIRECTIONS

Larger font directions

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2. **LISTEN:** Break the piece in half if possible (or break away from the larger bar). If you hear a clean “**snap**,” the chocolate is ready to eat. If you hear a dull “thud,” the chocolate is likely too warm or was poorly tempered.
3. **TOUCH:** Run your fingers across the surface. Notice the texture, from smooth or bumpy.
4. **SMELL & TASTE:** Smell first! Aroma is an important component of flavor; noting the chocolate’s profile will add another dimension to the tasting experience. (Refer to the "Chocolate Tasting Notes" for descriptive adjectives.) Place the chocolate on your tongue. Close your eyes. Let it melt slowly, allowing the cocoa butter to slowly coat your taste buds. After this, try chewing once or twice to further release the flavors. (Why? If you chew immediately, any astringencies or bitterness might overwhelm your palate.)
5. **EVALUATE (AND ENJOY):** Study how the aroma and flavor of the chocolate came together: bitter? sweet? light? heavy? Consider how these factors, along with the texture, evolve as the chocolate melts. And after the chocolate is gone, think of how the flavor lingers or if it has a quick finish.
6. **REPEAT!** Taste a variety of chocolate to discover the difference and find your favorites.

Chocolate #1: _____

Sound / Snap: Yes / No

Looks: Dark / Medium / White

Feels: Smooth / Bumpy

Smell & Taste: Sweet / Bitter

Overall Score: 😊 😐 😞

Chocolate #3: _____

Sound / Snap: Yes / No

Looks: Dark / Medium / White

Feels: Smooth / Bumpy

Smell & Taste: Sweet / Bitter

Overall Score: 😊 😐 😞

Chocolate #2: _____

Sound / Snap: Yes / No

Looks: Dark / Medium / White

Feels: Smooth / Bumpy

Smell & Taste: Sweet / Bitter

Overall Score: 😊 😐 😞

Chocolate #4: _____

Sound / Snap: Yes / No

Looks: Dark / Medium / White

Feels: Smooth / Bumpy

Smell & Taste: Sweet / Bitter

Overall Score: 😊 😐 😞