



Impact and benefits of participation of 50+ people, in creative activities

Getting old by itself is not a disease, but the negative points commonly connected to aging can make it look like a real disease.

Many changes in life, such as the ones occurring in the families structures – disperse, deaths, immigration of the younger –, can lead 50+ people to experience feelings of sadness, loneliness and bereavement resulting in a social isolation and, many times, poverty.

Many changes also occurs biologically, with the aging of the body cells resulting in different and most of the times worse responses from the body and from the brain to what it used to be so commonly better before.

Also, the loss of a role in the society due to these changes becomes a real issue to many of 50+ people creating a big impact on their sense of self-identity and consequently their self-esteem.

So, generally speaking, getting old is usually a synonym of a deteriorate wellbeing, that, if not fought, can lead to a very unhappy condition.

Many studies have already showed that engaging to arts, can contribute to improve the quality of life in many ways.

If getting old is not a disease, engaging to arts is surely not a medicine, but it can probably help prevent many diseases.

In our Association in Lousada, our implementation of the EDUC-ARTS project allowed us to observe many benefits to the people involved regarding their mental, physical and social wellbeing.

There were three different kinds of approaches that we could observe, all connected to music making:

- Sporadic workshops with mostly 65+ people;
- Weekly music lessons on singing and playing traditional music on traditional instruments with 50+ people;
- Weekly individual instrument lessons to 60+ people.



Regarding the benefits on the mental and physical wellbeing, we can enumerate these aspects:

- Pleasure, enjoyment of life, memory and creative thinking;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem;
- Increased relaxation and calmness;
- Feelings of accomplishment (specially after performing to an audience and receiving positive feedback from it);
- Exceed personal expectations;
- Building a new sense of identity and life role;
- Structure and routine;
- Eased dealing with difficulties such as the ones involved with, for example, retirement or widowhood, preventing low mood, anxiety and social isolation;
- Improved of the cognitive functioning, communication and musical skills;
- Health improvements on breathing control (singing and playing wind instruments) and on joint mobility (playing instruments);

And regarding the social benefits:

- Meaningful social contact, friendship and support from each other;
- Sense of belonging, social cohesion and community;
- Altruism (felt specially at performances – the positive impact showed not only in the people participating but also in the audience);
- Intergenerational contact;
- Decreased of discrimination based on stereotypes due to increased awareness and expectations within the wider community about what 50+ people are capable of.

Based on this, we can conclude that music making in later life is extremely worthy and should be very encouraged to happen more often.

Giving all 50+ people, particularly the unprivileged and the marginalized, these kinds of opportunity would surely be a way to make the world a better place to live.