

A group of six people are in a bright, airy room. Three women stand in the background, smiling. Three people are seated in the foreground, also smiling. They appear to be in a professional or educational setting. A small table in the foreground holds a container of colored pencils and some papers.

Every Interaction Matters

Essential Personal Care Skills for Adult Day Services Professionals

Produced for

New York State Adult Day Services Association (NYSADSA)

Presented by

Yulandie Latham, RN

"Providing safe, compassionate, and person-centered care—one interaction at a time."

Welcome

Every day, the care you provide makes a meaningful difference.

This course will guide you through a typical day at Harbor View Adult Day Center, where you'll learn practical skills to:

Prevent infection

Protect dignity

Promote independence

Support safe mobility

Assist with meals and personal care

Recognize and report important changes

Every interaction is an opportunity to improve someone's quality of life.





By the End of This Course You Will Be Able To:

01

Demonstrate proper hand hygiene and infection prevention practices.

02

Provide respectful toileting and incontinence care.

03

Assist with safe transfers and mobility.

04

Support participants during meals and feeding.

05

Provide grooming and bathing assistance while preserving dignity.

06

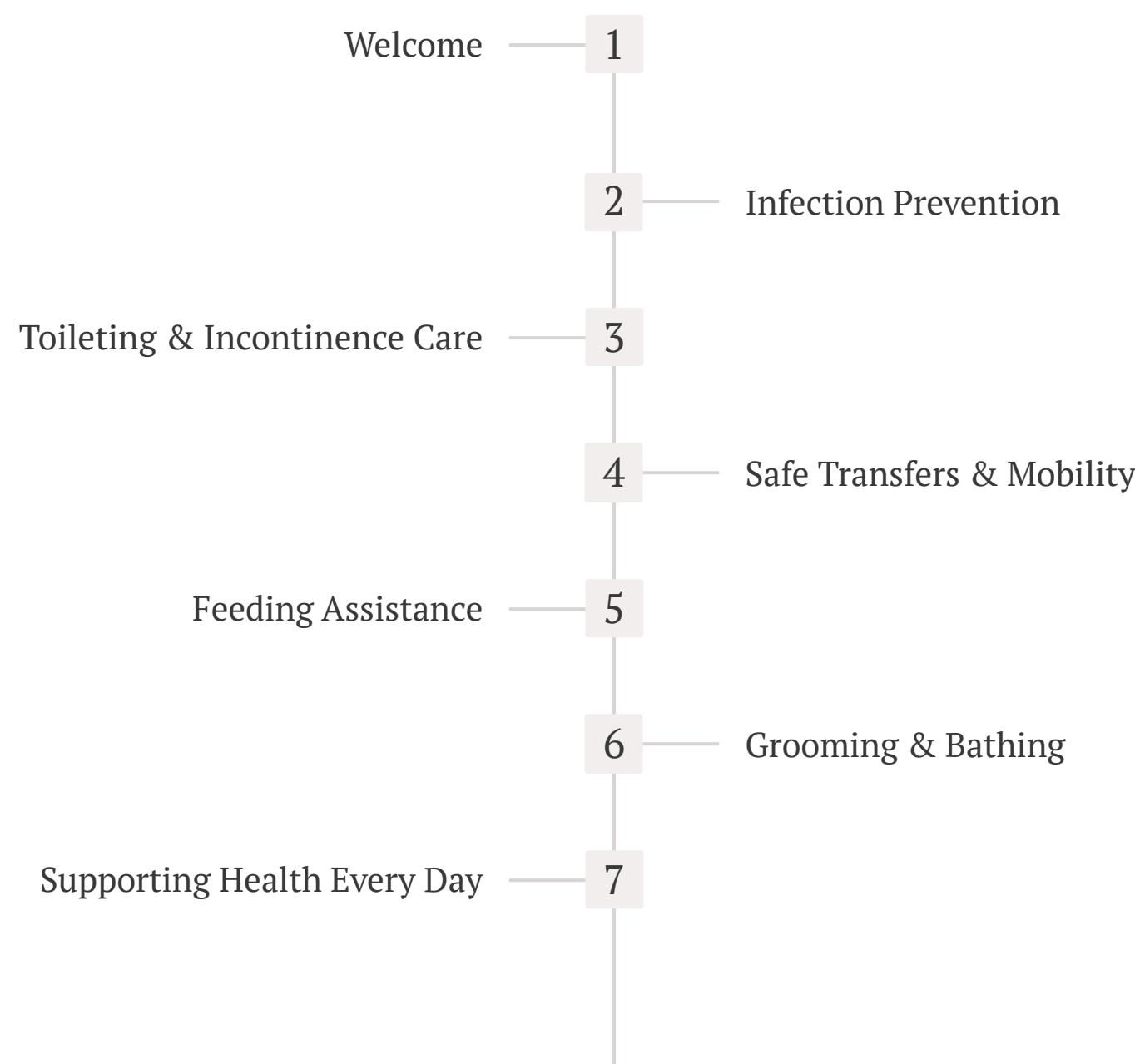
Recognize your role in dressing care, adaptive equipment, and medication assistance.

07

Identify and report changes in a participant's condition.



Today's Journey



Before We Begin

This training is designed to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and confidence of Adult Day Services professionals. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures, applicable New York State regulations, and your assigned scope of practice when providing care.



EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS

Essential Personal Care Skills for Adult Day Services Professionals

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Welcome to Harbor View Adult Day Center

Every morning, participants arrive with unique stories, abilities, and needs.

Today, you'll experience one day inside Harbor View Adult Day Center and learn how every interaction can protect health, preserve dignity, and promote independence.

Why Your Role Matters

Every day you help people:

Stay Safe

Preserve Their Dignity

Maintain Their Independence

Stay Connected

Live With Purpose

"The smallest act of care can make the biggest difference in someone's day."



Meet Today's Participants

James Johnson

- Former MTA Bus Driver
- Uses a walker
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Values his independence

Maria Rodriguez

- Retired Teacher
- Early dementia
- Loves music
- Needs occasional reminders

Samuel Lee

- Former Chef
- Parkinson's disease
- Proudly independent

Evelyn Carter

- Stroke survivor
- Wheelchair user
- Loves exercise class

Denise Brown

- Arthritis
- Artist
- Difficulty opening medication bottles





A Day at Harbor View Adult Day Center

Today's Journey



Every interaction matters.

Three Promises We Make

Safety

Protect participants from harm.

Dignity

Respect every individual.

Independence

Support abilities whenever possible.





8:00 AM

James Johnson arrives.

He smiles.

He reaches out to shake your hand.

What should happen before anything else?

Stop and Think

Which action protects every participant before care even begins?

Help James remove his jacket.

Escort him inside.

Perform hand hygiene.

Help him sit down.



Clean Hands Save Lives

Perform hand hygiene:

- Before participant contact
- After participant contact
- Before assisting with meals
- After restroom assistance
- After removing gloves
- After touching shared surfaces

One simple habit protects an entire community.

Why Infection Prevention Matters

Good infection prevention:

Prevents illness

Protects vulnerable older adults

Protects staff

Protects our community

Every participant deserves a safe beginning to their day.





Practice Pearls

Remember:

Safety comes before speed.

Dignity is part of every interaction.

Clean hands protect everyone.

EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS

Chapter 2 – Protecting Dignity

Toileting & Incontinence Care

10:15 AM — A Quiet Request

Maria has been enjoying the morning music program.

She suddenly becomes quiet and looks around the room.

She walks over to you and softly asks,

"Can you help me find the bathroom?"

Every request for help is an opportunity to protect dignity.



Why This Matters

Toileting assistance is one of the most personal forms of care.

How we respond can build trust, reduce anxiety, and preserve a participant's dignity.

Every participant deserves to feel respected, safe, and valued.





Before You Begin

Always remember to:

Respond Promptly

Answer every request without delay.

Introduce Yourself

Let them know who you are and that you're here to help.

Explain What You'll Do

Walk them through each step before you begin.

Encourage Independence

Let them do as much as they safely can.

Ensure Privacy

Close doors and curtains every time.

Hand Hygiene & Gloves

Wash hands and glove up before providing care.

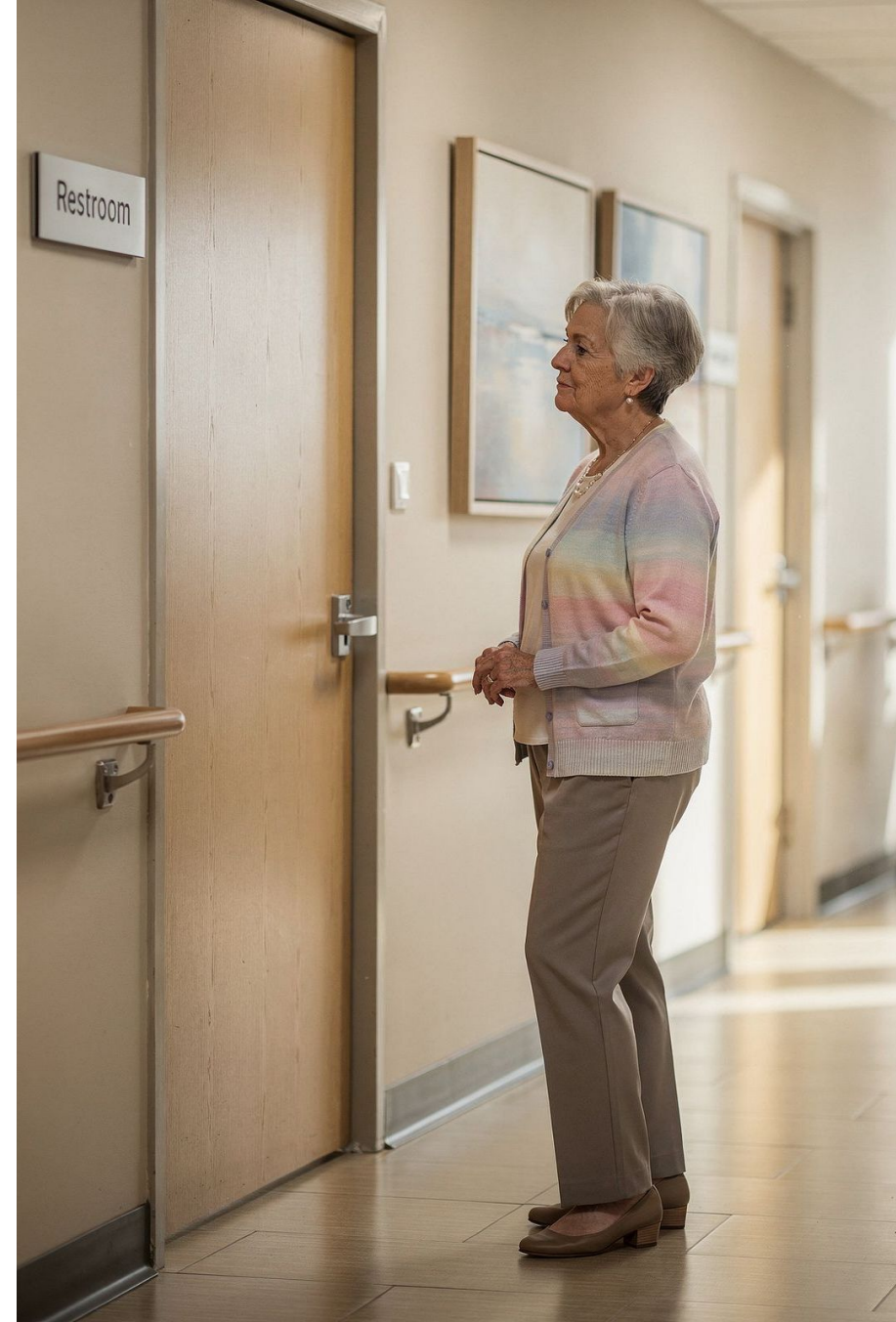
During Toileting Assistance

Provide care with compassion and respect.

Remember to:

- Protect privacy at all times.
- Speak calmly and respectfully.
- Never rush the participant.
- Observe for discomfort or changes in condition.
- Encourage independence whenever it is safe.

Small acts of kindness make a lasting difference.





Skin Care & Observation

While assisting with personal care, observe for:

Redness

Skin tears

Rashes

Swelling

Bruising

Pressure areas

Signs of infection

Early observation and reporting can prevent serious complications.

When to Report Concerns

Notify the appropriate supervisor or nurse if you observe:

New Skin Breakdown

Bleeding

Persistent Redness

Pain During Care

Unusual Odor

Blood in Urine or Stool

Sudden Changes in Continence

Never ignore changes in a participant's condition.





What Would You Do?

While assisting Maria, you notice redness and a small open area on her skin.

What is the BEST next step?

Ignore it because it is small.

Apply lotion without telling anyone.

Complete care safely and report your observation according to your organization's policy.

Cover it with a dressing without notifying anyone.

Correct Response

01

☒ Complete care safely.

02

Observe.

03

Report.

04

Document according to agency policy.

Do not diagnose or treat beyond your scope of practice.





Practice Pearls

Always remember:

❤️ Protect dignity.

🔒 Respect privacy.

🌱 Encourage independence.

👁️ Observe carefully.

📋 Report changes promptly.

Looking Ahead — Next Chapter Safe Transfers & Mobility

Helping participants move safely protects them from injury and promotes confidence and independence.

EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS

Chapter 3 – Safe Transfers & Mobility

11:00 AM — Time for Exercise Class

Evelyn Carter is excited to join the morning exercise session.

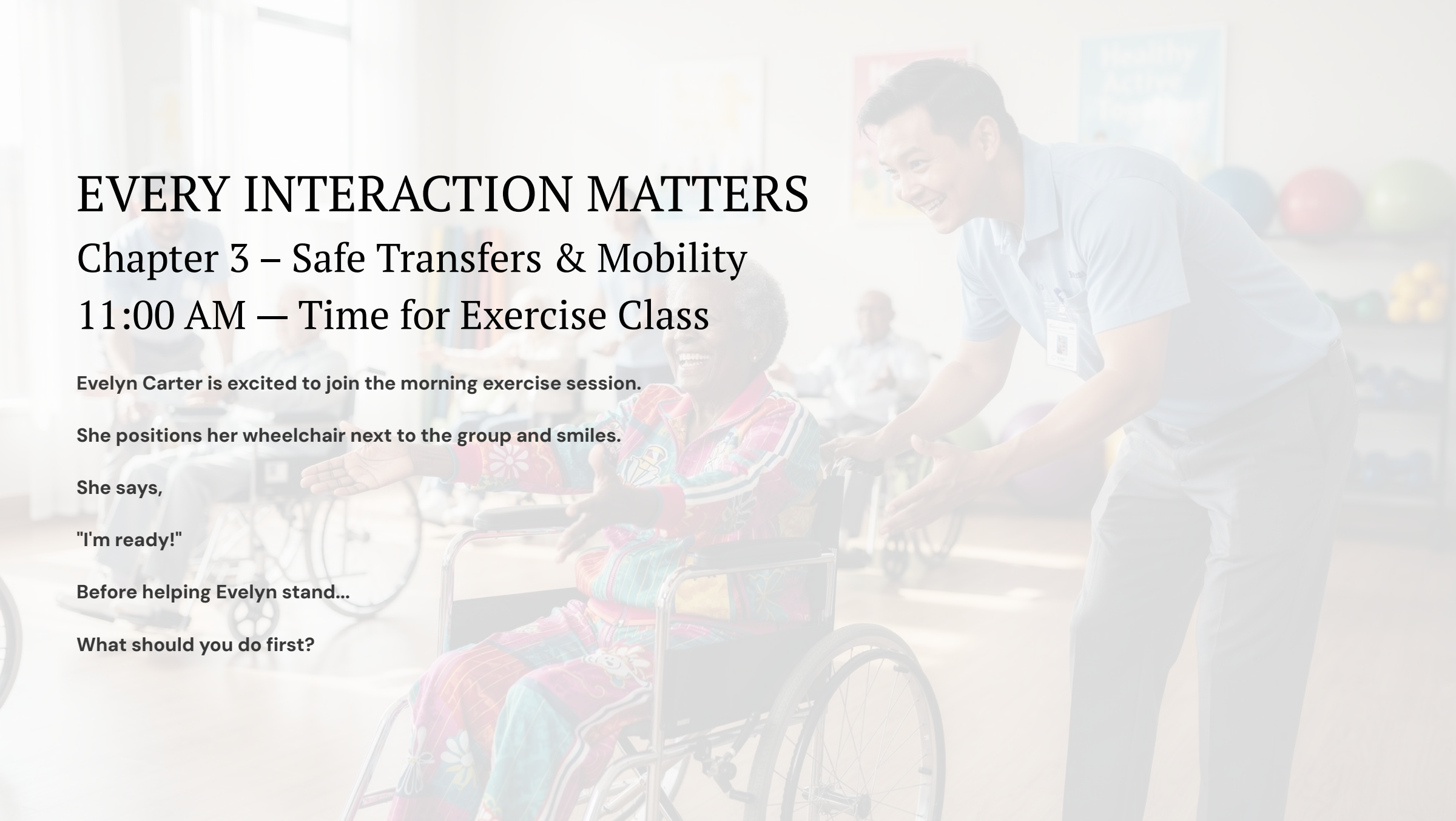
She positions her wheelchair next to the group and smiles.

She says,

"I'm ready!"

Before helping Evelyn stand...

What should you do first?



Why Safe Transfers Matter

Every safe transfer helps prevent:

Falls

Injuries

Loss of confidence

Staff injuries

Safe movement protects both participants and caregivers.





Before Every Transfer

Always:

- Explain what you are going to do.
- Lock wheelchair brakes.
- Ensure the floor is dry and free of clutter.
- Gather any needed equipment before beginning.
- Ask how the participant is feeling.
- Move footrests out of the way.
- Wear appropriate footwear.

Preparation prevents injuries.

Encourage Independence

Whenever it is safe:

- Allow the participant to do as much as they can.
- Give clear, simple instructions.
- Allow enough time.
- Avoid rushing.
- Offer encouragement throughout the transfer.

Your goal is to support—not replace—the participant's abilities.





Protect Yourself Too

Use proper body mechanics.

Remember to:

Wide base of support

Stand with a wide base of support.

Bend your knees

Bend your knees.

Keep your back straight

Keep your back straight.

Keep participant close

Keep the participant close to your body.

Avoid twisting

Avoid twisting while lifting.

Turn your whole body

Turn your whole body by moving your feet.

Protecting yourself helps you continue caring for others.

Mobility Aids

Know how to safely assist participants using:

- Walkers
- Canes
- Wheelchairs
- Gait belts
- Mechanical lifts (when trained and authorized)

Always inspect equipment before use.

Never use damaged equipment.





Fall Prevention

Help reduce the risk of falls by:

- Keeping walkways clear.
- Locking wheelchair brakes before transfers.
- Ensuring mobility devices are within reach.
- Encouraging proper footwear.
- Staying with participants who require assistance.
- Reporting changes in balance, strength, or mobility.

Every fall is an opportunity for prevention.

When to Stop

Do NOT continue a transfer if:

- The participant suddenly becomes weak.
- The participant reports pain.
- You feel the participant cannot safely stand.
- You need additional assistance.
- Equipment is not working properly.

Stop.

Protect the participant.

Get help.





What Would You Do?

While helping Evelyn stand, you notice the wheelchair brakes were never locked.

What should you do?

Continue carefully.

Ask Evelyn to hold onto the wheelchair.

Stop immediately, lock the brakes, and restart the transfer safely.

Move as quickly as possible before the wheelchair rolls.

Correct Response

01

✓ Stop.

02

Lock the wheelchair brakes.

03

Explain what you are doing.

04

Restart the transfer safely.

Safety always comes before speed.





Practice Pearls

Remember:

 Prepare before every transfer.

 Encourage independence.

 Use proper body mechanics.

 Never rush.

 Ask for help when needed.

Looking Ahead — Lunch Is Served

Next Chapter: Feeding Assistance

Helping participants eat safely promotes health, independence, and dignity.



Mealtimes Matters

Chapter 4 — Supporting dignity, nutrition, and independence at every meal

12:00 PM — Lunch Is Served

Samuel Lee has Parkinson's disease. He eats slowly and values his independence.

You're short on time. The next resident is waiting. It would be faster to just feed him yourself.

Should you feed Samuel to save time — or let him eat at his own pace?

This moment shapes not just his nutrition, but his sense of self. The answer matters more than the clock.





Why Mealtime Matters

For older adults and those with neurodegenerative conditions, mealtimes are about far more than food.

Nutrition

Fuel for body and brain

Hydration

Critical for cognition and health

Dignity

Respect and personhood

Independence

Autonomy and self-worth

Social Connection

Belonging and engagement

Each of these dimensions is active every time you sit down with a resident at mealtime.



Before You Begin: Setting the Stage

A safe and dignified meal starts **before the first bite**. Run through this checklist every time:

Hand Hygiene

Wash hands thoroughly — yours and the resident's

Upright Positioning

Seat at 90° to reduce aspiration risk

Check the Diet Order

Confirm texture and consistency requirements

Adaptive Utensils

Have weighted or built-up grip tools ready if needed

Calm Environment

Minimize noise and distractions

Safe Feeding Practices

Your role is to **support** — not take over. Follow these principles to keep mealtimes safe and respectful.

Encourage Independence

Let residents do as much as they safely can. Assist only where needed.

Offer Small Bites

Use a teaspoon-sized amount to reduce choking risk.

Keep a Slow Pace

Wait for a full swallow before offering the next bite or sip.

Observe Swallowing

Watch for throat movement and listen for any change in voice quality.

Never Rush

Rushing increases aspiration risk and diminishes dignity.





Warning Signs to Watch For

Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) is common in Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative conditions. Know the signs — and act promptly.

Coughing

During or after eating or drinking

Choking

Sudden blockage — act immediately

Pocketing Food

Food held in cheeks rather than swallowed

Difficulty Swallowing

Hesitation, grimacing, or repeated attempts

Wet or Gurgling Voice

Voice sounds "wet" after swallowing — a key red flag

Report Concerns

Document and report any sign to your supervisor immediately

A wet or gurgling voice after swallowing may indicate aspiration. Stop the meal and report right away.

Knowledge Check

Samuel begins coughing while drinking his water. What should you do?

01

Stop immediately

Pause all food and drink — do not continue while he is coughing.

02

Stay calm and reassure Samuel

Keep him upright and encourage slow, calm breaths.

03

Observe and assess

Check for a wet voice, continued coughing, or signs of distress.

04

Report to your supervisor

Document what happened, when, and how Samuel responded.





Practice Pearls

Four principles to carry with you every time you support a resident at mealtime.

Promote Independence

Assist only where needed — every task a resident does for themselves builds confidence and dignity.

Position Safely

Upright posture protects the airway and reduces aspiration risk before and during meals.

Observe Carefully

Watch every swallow. Notice changes in voice, pace, or comfort that could signal a problem.

Report Concerns

When in doubt, speak up. Timely reporting protects residents and supports quality care.



Chapter 4 — Key Takeaways

Every meal is an opportunity to protect health, honor autonomy, and build trust with the people in your care.

Coming Up Next

Chapter 5

Grooming & Bathing Assistance

Learn how to support personal care routines with safety, sensitivity, and respect for privacy.

Chapter 4 Complete ✓ Up Next: Chapter 5

Supporting Personal Care

It's 1:15 PM. Participants are freshening up before afternoon activities — some before seeing family, others before joining group programs.

How can we help someone feel confident while respecting their dignity?





Why Grooming Matters

Personal care goes far beyond appearance. Done with care and intention, it supports a person's whole well-being.

Dignity

Feeling clean and cared for affirms a person's sense of worth.

Self-Esteem

Looking their best helps people feel good about themselves.

Comfort

Routine care reduces irritation and physical discomfort.

Health

Regular hygiene prevents infections and skin breakdown.

Social Confidence

Feeling presentable encourages participation and connection.





Always Do These

Explain as you go

Narrate each step so the person knows what to expect.

Respect privacy

Close doors, use draping, and protect modesty throughout.

Encourage independence

Let them do as much as they are able and willing.

Check water temperature

Always test before applying water to skin.

Observe & report

Note any changes and follow your agency's reporting policy.

What Should You Observe?

Personal care is a prime opportunity to spot early signs of skin problems. Look carefully every time.

Skin Tears

Fragile skin can break easily with minimal friction.

Bruising & Swelling

May indicate injury, circulation issues, or other concerns.

Rashes & Redness

Early signs of irritation, allergy, or skin breakdown.

Pressure Areas

Check bony prominences — heels, hips, tailbone, and elbows.

Early reporting prevents serious problems. If you notice any changes, document and report them according to your agency's policy right away.



Practice Pearls

Carry these four principles into every personal care interaction.

Protect Dignity

Every person deserves to feel respected and valued during care.

Encourage Independence

Support what they can do — don't do it for them when they're able.

Honor Preferences

Ask about routines, products, and how they like things done.

Observe & Report

Your careful attention can catch problems before they escalate.

Coming Up Next

Chapter 6 – Supporting Health Every Day

Dressings • Adaptive Equipment • Medication Assistance



Supporting Health Every Day

As participants prepare to leave at the end of the day, staff complete final care tasks and ensure everyone is safe, comfortable, and ready to return home. **Every interaction still matters.**

End-of-Day Care

Simple Dressings

Some participants may require simple dressings before going home. Always operate within your role and your organization's guidelines.

Observe & Report

Watch for redness, swelling, drainage, unusual odor, or pain — and report changes promptly.

Know Your Scope

Follow your organization's policies. Never perform tasks outside your scope of practice.





Adaptive & Assistive Equipment

Adaptive equipment helps participants remain safe and independent throughout the day — and on their way home.

Common Examples

- Walkers and canes
- Wheelchairs and transfer belts
- Grab bars and raised toilet seats
- Reachers

Always inspect equipment before use. Report damaged or unsafe equipment immediately.

Know Your Role



Assistance with Self-Administration of Medications

You may assist participants as permitted by your organization and New York State requirements. Assistance looks different depending on your authorized role.

Reminders

Prompt participants when it is time to take their medication

Opening Containers

Assist with opening packaging when appropriate and permitted

Offering Water

Provide water to support safe swallowing

Observe & Report

Note any concerns and report them to the appropriate staff member

Never administer medications unless your role and organizational policy explicitly authorize it.

Safety First

When to Report

Prompt reporting protects participants. When you notice any of the following, act immediately — do not wait.

Changes in condition

New symptoms, altered behavior, or sudden decline

Medication or equipment concerns

Missed doses, confusion, or damaged assistive devices

Skin changes, falls, or pain

New wounds, near-falls, or any complaint of discomfort

When in doubt — **report it.**





What Would You Do?

"I already took my medicine this morning, but I can't remember if I took it again."

A participant shares this with you at the end of the day. What is the **safest** response?

✗ Tell them to take another dose

This risks a double dose and potential harm.

✗ Ignore the comment

Never dismiss a participant's medication concern.

✓ Follow policy & notify supervisor

Report to the appropriate nurse or supervisor immediately — this is always the correct action.

✗ Guess based on routine

Assumptions about medications are never safe.

Practice Pearls

Stay Within Your Role

Know your scope and never go beyond it

Promote Independence

Support participants in doing what they can for themselves

Observe Carefully

Your eyes and attention are powerful tools

Report Promptly

Timely reporting can make all the difference



Adult Day Center

Every Interaction Matters

Every smile

Every conversation

Every meal

Every act of kindness

Every moment of respect

Together, these moments improve lives.



Thank You

Thank you for your commitment to providing **safe, compassionate, and person-centered care** to the participants you serve each day.

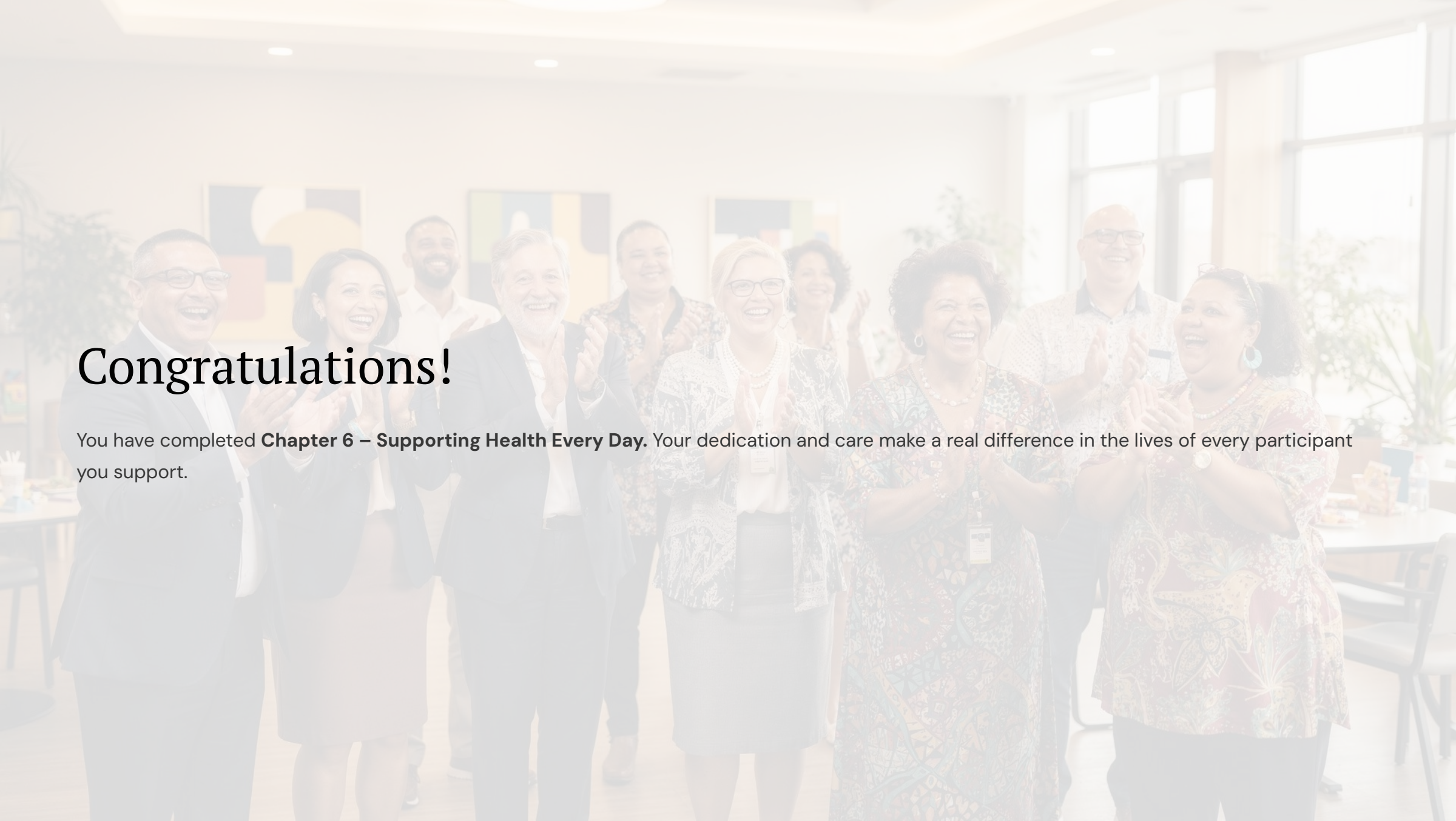
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A group of approximately ten diverse individuals, including men and women of various ages and ethnicities, are standing in a bright, modern interior space. They are all smiling and clapping their hands, suggesting a celebratory occasion. The background features large windows, indoor plants, and abstract art pieces on the wall. The overall atmosphere is positive and professional.

Congratulations!

You have completed **Chapter 6 – Supporting Health Every Day**. Your dedication and care make a real difference in the lives of every participant you support.