

Five Things Gerontologists Want You to Know about Longevity and Aging

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1

5 Things Gerontologists Want You to Know about Longevity and Aging

1. So, what is "successful aging"?
2. Is there a fountain of youth?
3. If I need care, who will take care of me?
4. And how am I going to pay for it?
5. But really, what should I "expect" as I grow older?

2

Baltes' Lifespan Perspective

Paul B. Baltes (1939 - 2006) was a German psychologist whose broad scientific agenda was devoted to establishing and promoting the life-span orientation of human development. He was also a theorist in the field of the psychology of aging.

- Development is:
- Lifelong
 - Multidimensional
 - Multidirectional
 - Context Specific
 - Historically embedded

3

"...inherent in the power of stories, is a danger - a danger of only knowing one story about a group. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The Danger of the Single Story

4

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Family, friends, work, community policy, beliefs and values, events in time all influence our development.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) was a Russian-born American psychologist who is most known for his ecological systems theory. His work with the United States government helped in the formation of the Head Start program in 1965. Bronfenbrenner's ability research was key in changing the perspective of developmental psychology by calling attention to the large number of environmental and societal influences on child development.

5

1.

So, what is "successful aging"?

Perception of successful aging despite illness

Emotional Well-being

Better health

Satisfaction with social engagement

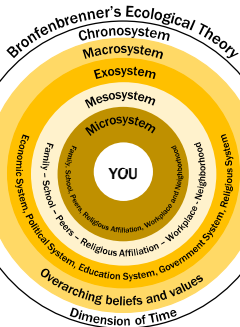
Greater resilience in the face of illness

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An individuated trajectory?



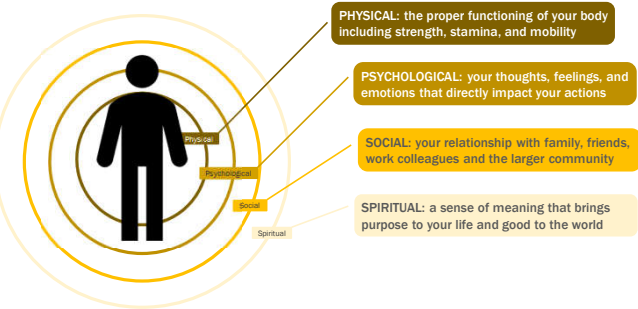
7



Family, friends, work, community policy, beliefs and values, events in time all influence our development.

8

Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Approach (BPSS)



9

The Connectedness Continuum

Definition of social isolation:
A state in which the individual experiences less social engagement with others than they would like, and they report that this interferes with their quality of life. (based on Nicholson)

Definition of social connectedness:
A state in which the individual experiences a satisfying number of social gatherings, close relationships and/or satisfaction with social contacts and reports that these experiences maintain their quality of life. (based on Toepoe)

10

2.

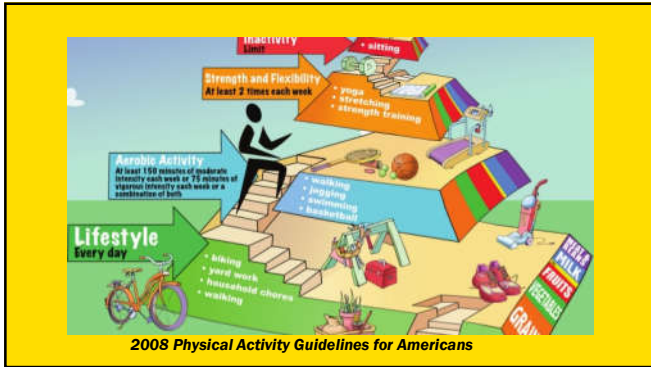
Is there a fountain of youth?

11

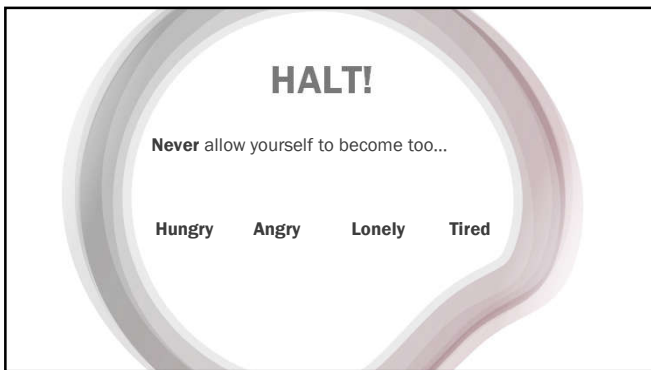
Six Components of a Care Plan

- Rest
- Hygiene
- Nutrition & Hydration
- Mobility
- Socialization
- Elimination

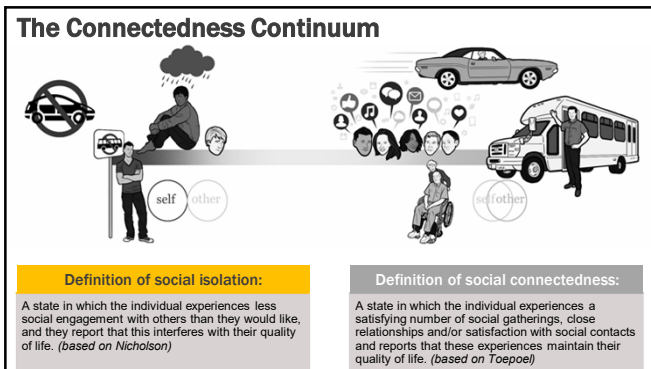
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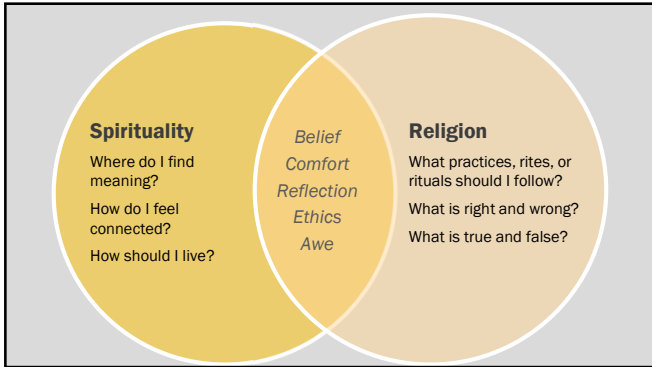
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14



15



16

The importance of spirituality during times of grief

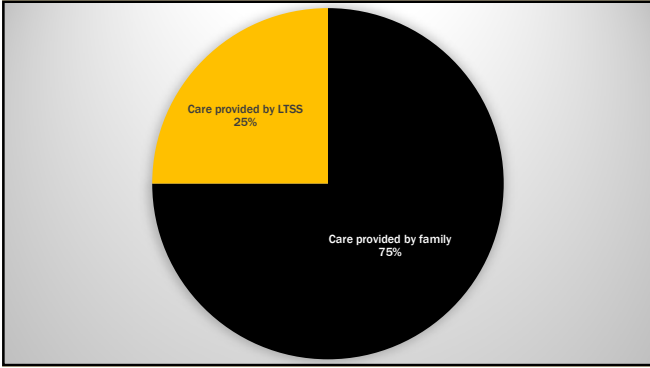
- Finding meaning in life
- Finding peace
- Resolving issues
- Others?

17

3.

If I need care, who will take care of me?

18

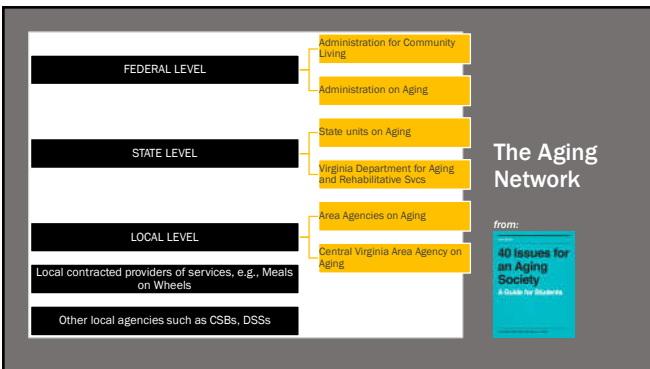


19

Long-Term Care or Long-Term Support Services

Home and Community-based Services	Residential / Medical	Residential / Assisted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Day Care • Home health Care • Homemaker/Personal Care • Social Support Services • Home-delivered meals • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing Facilities • Sub-acute Care • Inpatient Hospice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and Care • Assisted Living • Continuing Care Retirement Communities

20



21


Services provided by Area Agencies on Aging

Information and referral (I&R)

- Outreach services
- Transportation
- Care management
- Employment services
- Senior centers
- Congregate meals programs
- Adult day services
- Volunteer programs
- Home-delivered meals

Homemaker

- Chore
- Telephone reassurance
- Friendly visiting
- Energy assistance
- Emergency response
- Home health
- Personal care
- Respite care



22

4.

And how am I going to pay for it?

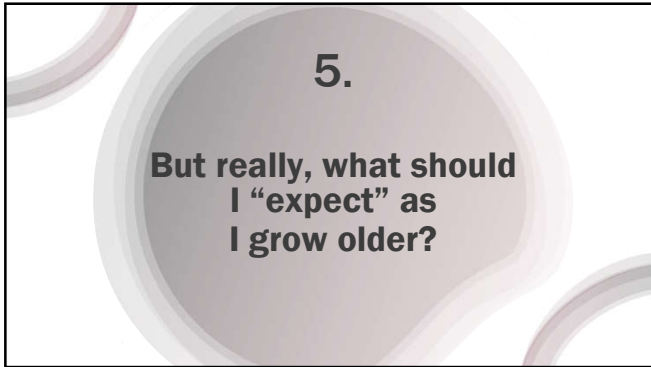
23

6-legged Stool



Labels on stool legs: Social Security, Employment, Public Benefits, Medical Coverage, Assets, Pensions

24



25



26

Learning and Memory

Cognitive functioning becomes more complex: we have many connections, and we have a lot of info to sort through

<p>Reaction time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slows but does not significantly impact day to day functioning. 	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced processing speed impacts encoding of new information. • Retention of information successfully learned is preserved. • Retrieval of newly learned information may be slower. • Selective and divided attention play a role. 	<p>Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive events are remembered more than negative events. • Restored and retold memories are well retained
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27

CHANGES WITH AGE	REMAINS STABLE WITH AGE
<p>DELAYED FREE RECALL spontaneous retrieval of information from memory without a cue. Tip of the Tongue Phenomenon.</p> <p><i>e.g.: Recalling a list of items to purchase at the grocery store without a list</i></p>	<p>RECOGNITION MEMORY ability to retrieve information given a cue</p> <p><i>e.g.: Correctly giving details of a story when given yes/no questions</i></p>
<p>SOURCE MEMORY knowing the source of the learned information</p> <p><i>e.g.: Remembering if you learned a fact because you saw it on TV, read it in a newspaper, or heard it from a friend</i></p>	<p>TEMPORAL ORDER MEMORY memory for the correct time or sequence of past events</p> <p><i>e.g.: Remembering last Saturday you went to the grocery store after you ate lunch with your friends</i></p>
<p>PROSPECTIVE MEMORY remembering to perform intended actions in the future</p> <p><i>e.g.: Remembering to take medicine before going to bed</i></p>	<p>PROCEDURAL MEMORY memory of how to do things</p> <p><i>e.g.: Remembering how to ride a bike</i></p>

28

"The Expectables"	12	16
	(Biological) Expectable Changes	Sweet 16: BPSS Expectable Changes
Brain Vision Hearing Gums Heart Bones Muscles Metabolism Large intestines Urinary tract Sexual health Skin	Muscle mass & bone density Balance and range of motion Happiness increases Well-being improves Positive mindset is more common Reduced stress Empathy Emotional regulation Semantic memory Procedural memory Decision making Integrative thought Executive functioning Wisdom of experience Storytelling Self-confidence	

29



30

Emotional Regulation and Experience

Older adults are better able to regulate emotions!

- Fewer negative emotional experiences (anger)
- Greater emotional control
- Sustained levels of Positive Affect
- More complex emotional experiences
- Positivity effect for personal memory

31

Emotional Well-Being

Positive emotions > Negative emotions → Faster recovery from illness
Better physical health
Stronger social relationships

32

Let's talk about "Senior Moments"

33

Ageist stereotypes
 “older adults are slow, grumpy, and set in their ways.”

34

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35

VCU College of Health Professions Gerontology

VCU Office of Continuing and Professional Education

LONGEVITY PROJECT
for a longer lifetime

Senior Connections
The Capital Area Agency on Aging
The Resource for Aging Well

36



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