Successful
Conscious
AGING
Productive
Positive
TERMS & THEORIES

- POSITIVE AGING
- SUCCESSFUL AGING
- PRODUCTIVE AGING
- OPTIMAL AGING
- CONSCIOUS AGING
Positive Aging

- What is it?

- A term that made its appearance in the late 1980’s in the journal Science

- Why then?
  - The population of the US was growing older
  - The baby boomers were coming of age
SUCCESSFUL AGING

- What is it?


- A wake-up call against the prevalent belief in aging as: disability, disease, and chronological age

- An Interdisciplinary Framework:
  Biological AND Social and Psychological
Successful aging, cont’d

“We emphasized the positive aspects of aging—The goal was to move beyond the limited view of chronological age and to clarify the genetic, biomedical, behavioral, and social factors responsible for retaining—and even enhancing—people’s ability to function in later life.”
3 KEY FACTORS in successful aging:

- Avoiding disease
- Maintaining high cognitive and physical function
- Engagement with life
Productive Aging

- What is it?

- Based on continuity from the middle years (continuity theory), where an individual is producing—income, children, work, ideas, etc.
- Based on the benefits of activity (activity theory) (The civic engagement movement has been associated with this idea)
Conscious Aging

- What is it?

A holistic approach that emphasizes attaining a sense of purpose, as well as an ongoing and growing awareness of “increasing integration of divergent elements of the self…to yield a more complex structure” (Moody, 2002).

A growing body of research correlates life satisfaction with having a strong set of beliefs that are associated with conscious aging (Koenig, 1988, 1994).
Optimal Aging

- What is it?

- This theory comes from the Life Span development approach.

- Optimal aging is not the same thing as successful aging. Successful aging is hierarchically based on a foundation of physical health and is defined by several specific dimensions as developed by Rowe and Kahn.
Optimal Aging, cont’d

- Optimal aging is about adaptation and *plasticity*, the *developmental capabilities within individuals modified by choices and environment*.

- Optimal aging is multidimensional:
  - It focuses on Health as defined by the W.H.O. in 1948—"a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
Optimal Aging, cont’d.

- SOC Framework
  - Selectivity
  - Optimization
  - Compensation
So what is Positive Aging?

- First a response to demographics
- Then a response to ageism:
  “Ageism is the “systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender”.
- Robert Butler, 1969, *Ageism-Another Form of Bigotry*

And finally, a way to highlight that there are both gains as well as losses in aging, **and it is time to focus on the gains.**
Debra

Evaluated for AD because of dysarthric speech
Referred for psychotherapy due to depression

- Female
- Single
- Former housewife; no employment history
- Social security and savings from previous marriage
- Lives alone with pet cat
- 67 years old
- Family history of dementia
- 3 adult children who live in different cities
- Mild cognitive impairment
- Good general physical health
- Lifelong negative attitude
Penelope

- Female
- Single
- Social security and savings
- Lives alone
- 85 years old
- One daughter in same city who helps with life management
- Mild cognitive impairment

- Issue: Complete knee replacement; reluctant/resistant to walking; prefers wheelchair, resting, reading, watching television
The Opposites

What is negative aging?

Can you be unsuccessful at aging?

What is unproductive aging?

What is unconscious aging?
The flip side

- Pressure to be a success and productive.
- Pressure to judge those who are not embracing the potential of later years.
- Neglecting the differences between self-reports and ‘objective’ assessments.
- Standard definitions of successful aging may fail to address what is gained in late life, i.e. the qualitative differences and minor adjustments that are associated with satisfaction.
2 common FEARS associated with aging

- DEPENDENCE
  
  *Tuesdays with Morrie, Mitch Albom*

- COGNITIVE LOSS (AD)
  
  *The Myth of Alzheimer’s, Peter Whitehouse, Daniel George, 2008*

How do we tell our story?
Are there gains if dependent?

Are there gains in cognitive loss?
GEROTRANSCENDENCE

- Lars Tornstam “Gerotranscendence: A developmental theory of positive aging” (2005)
- An individual continues to develop throughout the life cycle.
- New understandings of existential questions occur, i.e. life’s meanings, life’s limits.
- Identity less dependent on external world.
- Less self-occupied.
- More selective.
- Positive solitude.
Social Portfolio


- The Social Portfolio consists of 4 quadrants that include individual and group activities to be enjoyed using high mobility and low mobility.
- Each area highlights CREATIVITY
  i.e. creating a family recipe book; joining a theater group; creating a family newsletter; hosting a book club.
Positive Aging

- Allows us to think about the ways in which we can maximize our older years in numerous ways.
- Even in suffering (Viktor Frankl) Meaning is possible...
- How we discover it is not always clear to the outsider, but we can believe in it exists as long as one is alive.
Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207–1273) was, by common assent, the greatest poet in the history of Islam. He wrote in Farsi and his work is known and loved throughout the Islamic world and beyond. More recently, according to Publisher’s Weekly, Rumi has become the most widely read poet in America.
Why does a date-palm lose its leaves in autumn?
Why does every beautiful face grow in old age
Wrinkled like the back of a Libyan lizard?
Why does a full head of hair get bald?
Why is it that
the Lion’s strength weakens to nothing?
   The wrestler who could hold anyone down
Is led out with two people supporting him,
   Their shoulders under his arms?
God answers,
   “They put on borrowed robes
And pretended they were theirs.
I take the beautiful clothes back,
So that you will learn the robe
Of appearance is only a loan.”
Your lamp was lit from another lamp.
All God wants is your gratitude for that.
Table I: Promotion of Optimal Nutrition
Replace saturated and trans fats with unsaturated fats.
Substitute whole-grain carbohydrates for refined-grain carbohydrates.
Substitute nuts, beans, chicken, and fish for red meats.
Eat 9 servings per day of fruits and vegetables.
Use alcohol in moderation.
Take a daily multivitamin.

(Annals of Long Term Care, Optimal Aging, 2007, Kenneth Brummel-Smith, MD)
Table II: Promotion of Optimal Cognitive Health
Take a multivitamin.
Engage in mentally stimulating activities.
Remain socially engaged.
Exercise regularly.
Develop methods to detect and reduce stress (eg, relaxation, yoga, meditation).
Get adequate sleep.
Table III: Exercises to Promote Optimal Aging

- Do some form of exercise for 30 minutes a day.
- Never use an elevator or escalator when stairs are available.
- Walk or bike on errands that would take less than 10 minutes to drive.
- Don’t use remote control devices.
- Use manual devices when possible (e.g., lawn mower, broom).
- Park a long distance from the main door when shopping.
Table IV: Exercises to Improve Balance
Engage in exercise that requires balance (e.g., tai chi, dancing).
While standing in line or cooking, stand on one leg (or with feet in tandem).
Try heel or toe walking for short distances (10-20 ft).
Stand up and sit down on chairs using one leg (with hand support if needed).

Table V: Exercises to Improve Strength
Lift small weights (one can of peas) in a plastic shopping bag, 10 repetitions on each side (vary the muscle groups).
Bag handles with a can inside can be placed over feet to exercise the leg muscles.
Do sit-to-stand-to-sit exercises while watching TV.
Join a health club that has both free weights and weight machines, and do strength training 2-3 times per week.
What stories *do* we and our clients tell?
What stories *can* we tell ourselves and our clients?
What will our stories be?