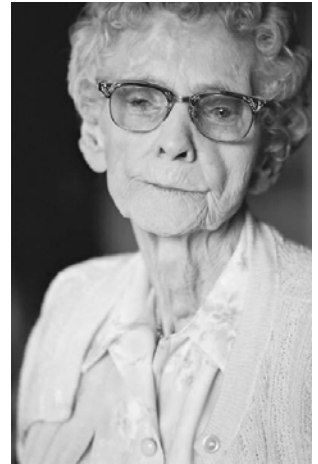


Attitudes Towards Aging

All around you are signs that today's emphasis is on _____. Products that hide the gray, reduce wrinkles, and cover age spots all point to a _____ with staying young. Youth is desirable; old age is not.

Although progress is being made against this attitude, some people are still _____ against older adults. They feel that older people cannot be as alert, intelligent, and _____ as younger people. This bias is called _____. Like all prejudices, it is unfair. It views all people as alike, instead of as distinct, _____ individuals. Ageism prevents older adults from living their lives to the fullest. It also denies others the opportunity to _____ from their talents and experience.



RECOGNIZING STEREOTYPES

If you don't know older adults very well, you might find it easy to believe many stereotypes about them. Most stereotypes about older adults are negative. List as many as you can think of here:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Some stereotypes, on the other hand, are more positive. List as many as you can here:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Older people may or may not have any of the qualities that are listed as stereotypes. What are some negative stereotypes regarding teenagers?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Beyond Stereotypes

In general, members of society are grouped by _____. Most people spend the majority of their time with those in their age group. As a result, many young people have not had much _____ with people over age sixty-five.

Stereotypes never tell the whole story. Older adults are not all the same, just as teens are not all the same. You must look at individuals and understand what aging is all about in order to see the real people behind the myths.

THEORIES ON AGING

The aging process is a _____ part of living. _____ is the study of the aging process. It has helped many people understand older adults and the problems and _____ of growing older.

Two general theories explain how the lives of older adults change as they age. These theories appear to _____ each other.

Activity Theory:

- This theory says, "Use it or lose it." In other words, active, involved people _____ with aging more _____ than people who are less active.
- Physical, mental and social skills remain _____ when they are used often.
- Those who don't exercise soon can't.
- This theory suggests that older adults should stay as _____ and _____ as possible.

Disengagement Theory:

- Disengagement means _____ from others and activity.
- This theory states that in old people, it is normal and healthy for people to become more _____ and _____.
- Social activities and contacts are less frequent and important. Physical activity _____ as the body ages.
- Older people grow less concerned about others and focus more on themselves.
- Disengagement may seem like a logical progression for older people. Studies have shown, however, that disengaged people are less happy, healthy, and satisfied in almost every area of life than those who remain active and involved.

Which Theory is Accurate?

Given the broad range of older adults—from sixty-five to ninety-five and older—it's possible that both theories are true. When people first retire, having outside interests and activities may be the healthiest, most fulfilling lifestyle. As they age and approach death, however, disengagement may be one way to prepare to leave family and friends.

CHANGES AS PEOPLE AGE:

Physical Changes:

The physical effects of aging are usually the most _____ ones. In general the body _____ and abilities _____.

- **Examples:** overall weakness, slower reactions and reflexes, loss of hearing & vision, brittle bones, decreased sense of smell and taste, chronic diseases, Alzheimer's
- **Maintaining Physical Health:** exercise is as beneficial and no more dangerous to older adults than to younger people, good nutrition is important (many physical problems are made worse by poor eating habits), attitude can be a major factor in determining physical ability - older people who realize that aging is not a disease and that sickness is not inevitable are more likely to work at maintaining their health.

Mental Changes:

Some changes that older adults experience have to do with the _____. As the body slows, the mind often does, too.

- **Examples:** Many encounter problems with memory & problem solving but these are often due to outside factors such as depression, grief, poor health, poverty, and a lack of trying. However, they are often more thorough in their learning.
- **Maintaining Mental Health:** Mental stimulation is necessary to keep older adults thinking effectively. Their activities should require active, not passive, participation. Some older people join clubs or become politically active. Others take part-time jobs, continue their education, or serve as volunteers. Many community groups and activities offer discount rates to older adults to encourage their participation.

Thoroughness was an asset for seventy-three-year-old George Wysocki. Although he had retired from his job as an assembly line supervisor, he waoften consulted when problems arose on the line or what a new method was needed to improve productivity. It took George a while to understand all the aspect of the problem. Once he did, however, his experience on the line and his long-practiced reasoning ability enabled him to offer valuable suggestion. George enjoyed the mental challenge and the chance to be useful.

Social Changes:

Older adults may see _____ in their social roles and relationships. As some roles become less _____, they often develop new ones.

When Millie's husband retired, it was almost as trying for her as for him. Clarence had been a food-processing plant manager for almost 30 years. Now he wanted to "manage" the household, which Millie considered her job. This caused resentment for Millie and frustration for Clarence. Then Clarence heard about a b program to help young business owners by matching them with retired business managers. Participating in the program allowed Clarence to share his knowledge and experience with someone who could appreciate his help.



- **Examples:** often they have difficulties dealing with retirement (lose sense of worth), changes in role, loss of family and friends (through death, moving away etc.), friendships become more rewarding and healthy.

- **Maintaining Social Health:** social individuals tend to stay that way, just as those who live a quiet life maintain the pattern, there are many community programs available for the elderly to maintain their social lives and also buses and transportation to get them to and from the events.

Emotional Changes:

As they age, some people feel that life no longer has _____ for them.

- **Examples:** They may believe that no one needs or respects them. Sometimes this occurs in retirement due to loss of the work role. Older adults may become depressed or discouraged about living. This can be a response to the death of a spouse or friends, or to increasing health problems. Childless men whose wives have died are most likely to lack the will to live. This feeling of despair also worsens the effects of other physical conditions and diseases.

- **Maintaining Emotional Health:** Need to balance activity and involvement with the tendency toward disengagement. In addition to being active, they also need opportunities to talk about the past. By reminiscing, they sort through their experiences and make sense of their lives. Contact with friends and family members is one of the best ways to maintain emotional health. Younger people can encourage conversation, visit, and show appreciation for the wisdom and experience that older people have.

When Lurleen's husband of 42 years died, she thought she would, too. Social activities seemed to be frightening or painful without him to share them with. Finally, her daughter persuaded her to see a counsellor. With help, Lurleen came to see that she still had much to live for. She found the courage to stand on her own and take control of her life again.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

1. Is there an older adult in your life? Do you think they are physically, mentally, socially and emotionally healthy? How?

2. How could you contribute to their overall health?



3. For each of the 4 categories of health, list your plans to ensure you lead a healthy life in your older years (Be careful not to stereotype):

Physically

Mentally

Socially

Emotionally
