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Successful Aging: Twenty Years Later

Image Source: Ron Carson

Learning Outcomes

- Discuss successful aging principles.
- Discuss flow principles.
- Apply successful aging and flow principles into occupational therapy treatment.
It is not by muscle, speed, or physical dexterity that great things are achieved, but by reflection, force of character, and judgement; in these qualities old age is usually not only not poorer, but is even richer.

Cicero (44 B.C.)

Case Application

78 y/o woman being seen in home secondary to hip fx who fell while rock climbing. No additional injuries. Patient is depressed since her accident. Now, shows fear of falling during mobility-related ADL’s. Reluctant to participate in OT.

Based on today’s course, what successful aging and “flow” principles should be considered as part of an OT treatment plan?
Definitions

- **Successful Aging** is the process of aging while avoiding disease, engaging in life, and staying active.

- **Normal Aging** is the process of normal age-related changes and the *probability* of disease-related changes.

- **Abnormal Aging** is the presence of age-related changes and abnormal diseases, conditions, and syndromes.
“Normal” Age-Related Changes

- Physical
  - Decreased cardiovascular-pulmonary function
  - Decreased muscle mass
  - Decreased flexibility
  - Increased body fat
  - Decreased visual acuity

- Cognitive
  - Decreased processing speed
  - Decreased new learning potential

- Socio-Cultural
  - Loss of role identity
  - Increasing isolation
Successful Aging

Successful aging goes beyond potential; it involves activity.
(Rowe & Kahn, 1997)

Controversy

- Defining successful
  - No singular agreed upon definition
- Personal impact of not being successful
- Societal expectations versus personal expectations
  - Who determines successful and how?
  - One study shows certain ethnicities age less successfully (Wada, Mortenson, & Clarke, 2016).
- Stereotyping - is it ever good?
  - “Standards for successful aging reflect value judgments that are culturally and historically situated” (Angel et al., 2018).
History of Successful Aging

  - Life Satisfaction Inventory Aging Scale
- 1997 - Successful Aging, (Rowe & Kahn, 1997)
- 2011 - Successful Aging Inventory (Troutman, Nies, Small, & Bates, 2011)

Jeanne Calment
1875 - 1997

“Loved sugar”
Smoked
Very active lifestyle
At 100 years old, broke her leg
bicycling
Lived independently until 110
At 114, fell, breaking leg
Avoiding Disease and Injury

- Eliminating or reducing disease risk factors
  - Diet
    - Sugars, fats, processed foods
  - Exercise
    - Moderate versus extreme
- Stress
- Genetics
- Lifestyle, including social integration
- Age-related vs. age-caused
Avoiding Disease and Disability

Engaging Life

- Interpersonal relationships
  - Protective mechanism
  - Especially for men, connectedness is good
- Productive activity
  - Creates social value
- Marriage
Relationships

- Socio-emotional
- Instrumental
  - Associated with lower physical performance
  - But, mixed results
- Isolation bad for health and life

Productive Activity

- Includes activities which create goods or services of economic value
- Most older people meet this “obligation” and need
- Positive relationship with high cognitive function
High Cognitive Function

- Four predictive variables (40%)
  - Education
  - Strenuous activity in and around the home,
  - Peak pulmonary flow rate
  - Self-efficacy
- Age-related changes may predict changes in cognitive function

Self-Efficacy

- Master of our domains
- Sense of control
- Awareness of both
Is Positive Change possible?

- Capacity remains
- Plasticity is possible
- Resilience
  - Grit, (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009)

What Does Successful Aging Mean for OT

- Importance of incorporating successful aging principles in OT therapy?
  - Evaluation
  - Treatment planning and goal setting
  - Treatment
Integration

- Evaluation
  - How to identify a successful ager
  - Preconceived ideas of therapist vs. patient
  - Impact of successful ager now facing loss of control
- Treatment

A Secondary Contribution - Flow

- When what we want, what we are able to do, and what’s available to do are in congruence.
- Occurs when the mind is focused on a task
- When what we think, feel, and wish are in harmony
- Occurs when skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge
- More than happiness
Flow: Challenges and Abilities

- Anxiety
- Flow
- Bored
- Relaxed

Image Source: Ron Carson

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What Does “Flow” Mean for OT

- Provide the just right challenge
- Opportunity for mastery
- Promote control
- Increase
Case Application

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Questions

Contact Information

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References