

AGING “SIDEWAYS”

**Let's Change
How We Get Older!**

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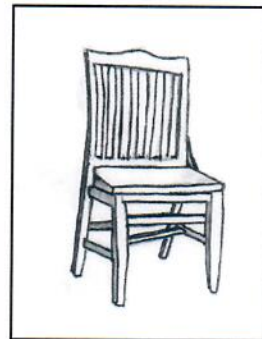
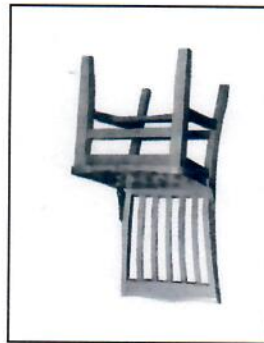
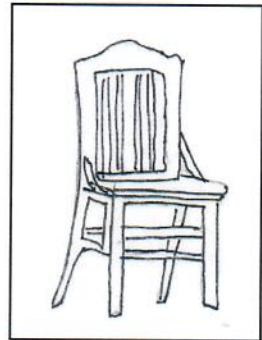
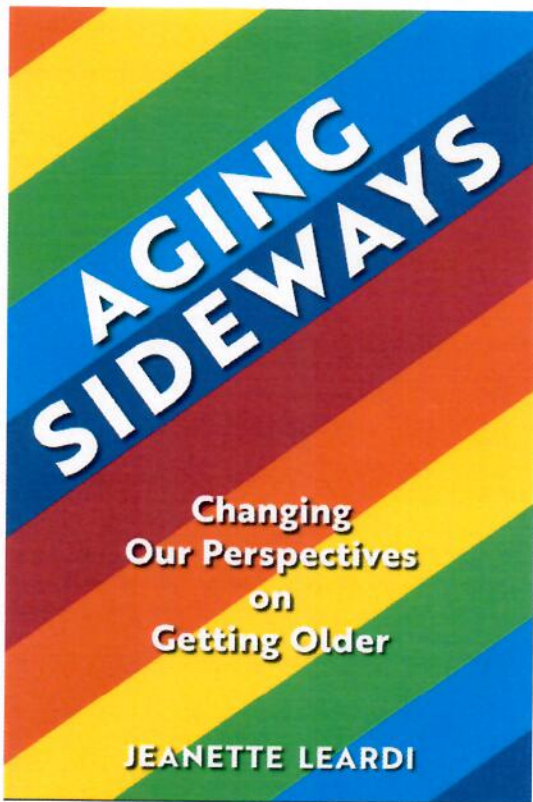
How Much Do You Know About Aging?

True (T) or False (F)?

- Babies born today in the U.S. have a 10% chance of living to be 100 years old. (F)
- Half of Americans over age 65 have some form of dementia. (F)
- Ageism (discrimination based solely on chronological age) is the most common prejudice worldwide. (T)

Which is correct?

- At what age can children first start to have negative feelings about getting old?
3 6 10 13
- About how many Americans over age 60 use social media daily?
35% 50% 66% **80%**
- How many Americans annually die of old age?
20% 45% 53% 68% **(0)%**



A Few Realities to Consider

Aging isn't a disease, nor is it solely a process of deterioration and decline.

Most older adults are cognitively healthy.

As a group, old people are more heterogeneous than young people.

More Realities to Consider

The vast majority of old people are open to — and capable of — change.

No one ages “successfully” alone; to do so, we need one another.

Ageism is rampant in our culture.



Fear of BEING the "other"

YIPPEE! I WOKE UP!



Why retirees are always so happy



help!
I've fallen for you
and I can't get up!®

Ageism Goes Both Ways



Source: <http://www.primermagazine.com/2013/live/is-the-millennial-generation-really-lazy-entitled-and-selfish-a-cnn-comic-strip-by-matt-bors>

Internalized Ageism

“I’m too old for this.”

“I can’t learn/do this at my age.”

“It’s too late for me to start now.”

“What do you expect from an old
_____ like me?”

“I’m not old!”/“I’ll never get old!”

The Six Assets of Aging

1. Broader experience, sharper skills, and greater wisdom.
2. Greater individuation.
3. Closer proximity to mortality.
4. Different motives and life purpose.
5. Strength in numbers.
6. A different brain.

Older Adult Brain: Deficits

- slower speed of processing
- challenges with working memory and “fluid” intelligence (short-term memory)
- challenges with multitasking
- longer learning periods, info “chunking,” and more review opportunities needed

Older Adult Brain: Assets

More brain-cells and connections = greater cognitive reserve



recall
→



recall
↙ & apply

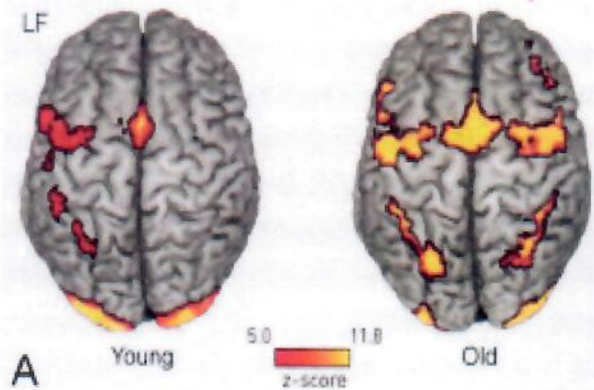
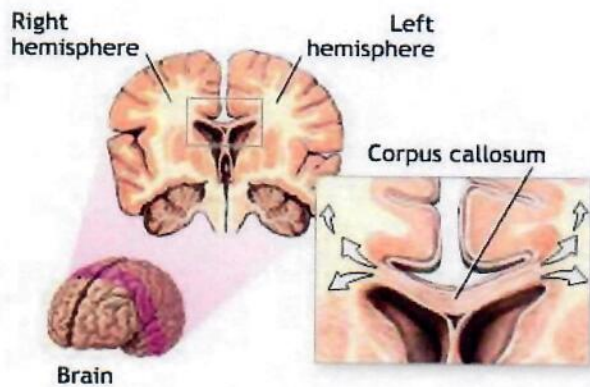


recall
→
& apply
continually



Older Adult Brain: Assets

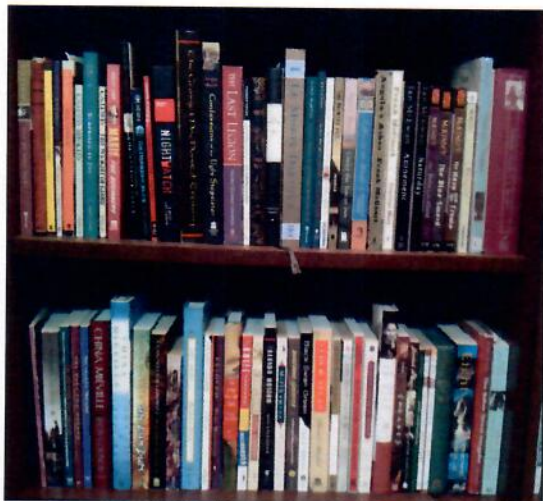
Bi-hemispheric processing  multi-perspective problem-solving skills



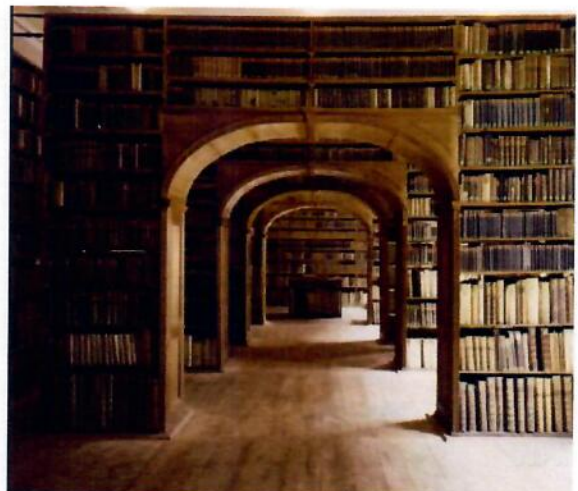
Source: Reuter-Lorenz, P.A., & Park, D.C. (2010). Human neuroscience and the aging mind: a new look at old problems. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 65B(4), 408.

Older Adult Brain: Assets

Higher “crystallized” intelligence
(long-term memory)

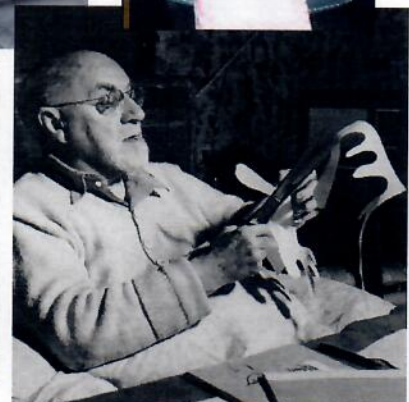


VS.



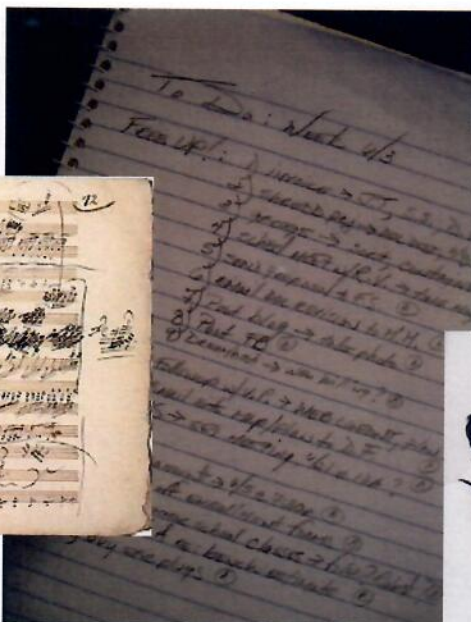
Older Adult Brain: Assets

Greater single-task focus, concentration



Older Adult Brain: Assets

Sharper information-discrimination ability



Older Adult Brain: Assets

Emotional Regulation



People who perceive aging positively live on average 7½ years longer and may reduce their likelihood of getting dementia by 50%.

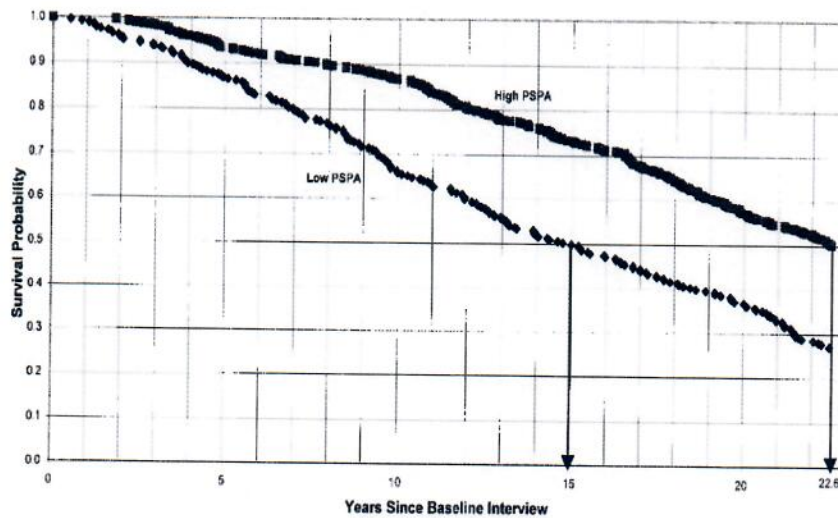


Figure 1. Influence of positive self-perceptions of aging (PSPA) on survival. Arrow indicates median survival.

Source: Levy, Becca R.; Slade, Martin D.; Kunkel, Suzanne R.; Kasl, Stanislav V. "Longevity Increased by Positive Self-Perceptions of Aging," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2002, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp. 261–270

“Sideways” Way #1: Be Flexible

Sidestep a deeply embedded obstacle you’re approaching rather than retreating from it or futilely trying to remove it.

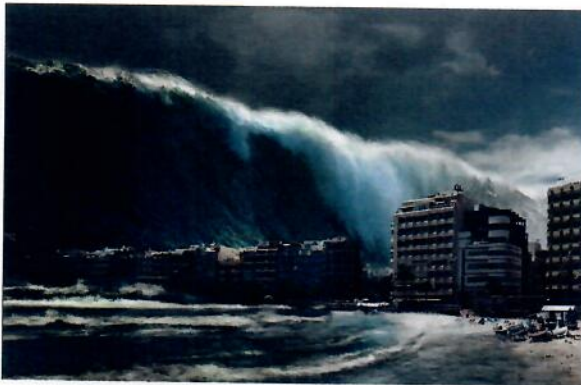


- Use humor.
- Acknowledge and correct “compassionate/benevolent ageism” and “elderspeak.”
- Find a more pro-aging healthcare provider.
- Start your own business.

“Sideways” Way #2: **Be Skeptical**

Redefine a term or concept in a way that makes its meaning more accurate or more relevant to you.

The Myth of the “Silver Tsunami”



The Reality of the “Silver Reservoir”



Four Word-Transforming Strategies

- 1) Retire some words permanently (*cranky, grumpy, doddering, feeble, over the hill*).
- 2) Find other, non-loaded words as substitutes (*elders, older adults, third age*)
- 3) Embrace and neutralize the “toxic” terms by redefining them (*senior, crone, Geezer Gallery*)
- 4) Reject the “tyranny of ‘still’.”* (Exceptionalism, Overcompensation)

* Dr. Bill Thomas

“Sideways” Way #3: Be Broadminded

Look peripherally as you move forward rather than only straight ahead or in the rear-view mirror.



- Use the improv technique of “Yes AND” to consider your other skills (“What’s YOUR ‘And’?”).
- Seek out other options that are available to you.

“Sideways” Way #4: Be Daring

Be open to the unexpected rather than try to control what you encounter in the moment.

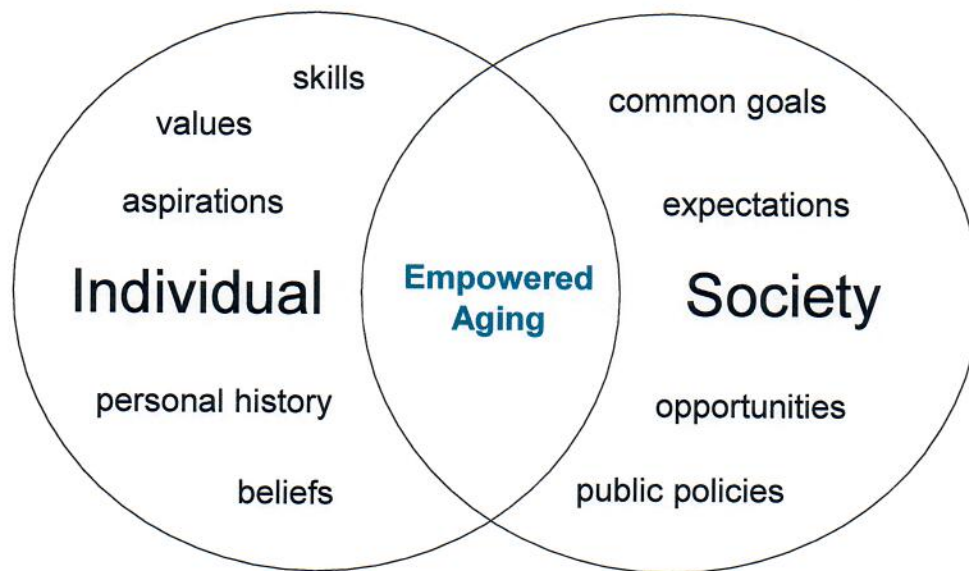


- See older age as a time just as adventurous and full of possibility as other life stages.
- Be an “Old Person in Training.”
- Embrace the Power of One.

6 “Right-Side-Up” Questions

- Where/When have I seen this happen before?
- Who benefits from this negative situation/condition?
- Does what I’m experiencing/witnessing have to do with age, or is it about something else?
- Why is this belief/behavior considered acceptable?
- What if this situation/condition didn’t exist?
- What can I/others do to manage/change this situation/condition?

Let's Promote Empowered Aging!



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<https://asaging.org/ageism-awareness/>

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