ADJUSTING TO THE AGING PROCESS

Learning Objectives

• To recognize physical, behavioral, and emotional changes as we grow older

• To distinguish differences between age-related changes and disease-related changes

• To become aware of stressors and identify strategies for managing them

• To recognize the benefits of making positive choices for healthy aging

Dynamics of Population Aging

• In the U.S. the youngest baby boomers are about forty-five. The oldest are mostly sixty-five years and on the verge of retiring.
  - By 2030, Americans elderly population is expected to reach 72 million, more than double the number in 2000
  - By 2030, 55 countries are expected to see their 65 and older populations grow to at least 20% of their present total
  - By 2050, Europe will continue to be the world’s oldest region with its elder population increasing more than five fold, from 40 million to 219 million.

• These changes in life expectation is very unique, never before occurring throughout human history. Enormous social and economic changes in the world’s societies lie ahead.
THE AGING PROCESS

Aging

Biological age does not correlate with chronological age

Biological/Physiological Changes

- Two biological phenomena appear related to the aging process
  - Accumulation of waste products in the cells
  - Loss of elasticity of the connective body tissue
- Senescence and Adaptation also occurs during this stage
Psychological Changes

Information Processing
- Reaction Time
- Intelligence
- Learning
- Memory
- Problem-Solving
- Personality

Social Factors

Society is created from a consensus of individuals.

These individuals, in turn, are influenced by the society in which they live. Thus, both individuals and groups define and re-define our sense of self as we develop and as society changes. And society's view of "growing old" or being "old" is no exception to this process.
Social Factors

- Ageism
- Gerontophobia
- Retirement

Common Changes as the Body Ages

- Vision and Hearing difficulties
- Insomnia
- Arthritic changes in joints; loss of bone tissue
- Slower reflexes
- Lower pulse rate, shortness of breath
- Diminished ability to sweat and salivate
- Increased frequency of urination
- Decreased sensitivity of senses
- Increased sensitivity to some medications
- Drier, thinner skin
- Some loss of short-term memory

Behavioral & Emotional Changes That Can Occur with Aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Fear of loss of control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger/Resentment</td>
<td>Anxiety and uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigidity</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrationality</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Common Age-Related Sicknesses

- Alcoholism
- Alzheimer’s
- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular
  - Heart disease
  - Arteriosclerosis
  - Hypertension
  - Stroke
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Parkinson’s disease

On the Lookout for Symptoms

- Abrupt change in ability to handle day-to-day functions
- Chronic pain
- Frequent falls; dizziness
- Incontinence
- Increased use of alcohol

On the Lookout for Symptoms (continued)

- Increasing confusion or forgetfulness
- Persistent memory loss that interferes with daily activities
- Sad and withdrawn behavior; lack of enthusiasm, increased sleep and disinterest in food
- Sudden personality change
- Sudden, unexplained dramatic change in weight
Typical Stressors for Older Adults

- Loss of control (body, emotions, cognitive, daily living)
- Loss of privacy
- Fear of disease and pain
- Change in relationships with adult children
- Financial strains affecting lifestyle
- Death of friends and family members
- Loss of independence and freedom
- Limited mobility
- Fear of burdening family members
- Feeling embarrassed about being old

Useful Strategies to Help Deal with Stressors

- Foster a positive attitude.
- Openly discuss feelings.
- Stay physically active.
- Strive for adaptability to change.
- Hold onto your sense of humor.
- Accept that changes are natural and “age appropriate.”
- Join groups; maintain contact with others.
- Try relaxation techniques.
- Seek medical advice about medication options.
- Plan and do what you need to for your future.

Thoughts for Aging Well

- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind
- Challenge your brain
- Work up a sweat
- Regular checkups
- Get enough sleep
- Manage stressors
Keep Active

- Get at Least 30 Minutes of Activity Most Days of the Week
- Keep Using Your Muscles
- Practice Your Balance
- Stretch

Eating Well: Memory Boosting Foods

- Slows down age-related memory decline in women
  - Broccoli
  - Cabbage
  - Brussels Sprouts
  - Cauliflower
  - Dark Leafy Vegetables

- Slows down memory loss
  - Guercetin-rich foods like onions, kale, apples and berries

Eating Well: Memory Boosting Foods Cont....

- Folic Acid protects blood vessels and help neurons in the brain communicate more effectively
  - Fortified whole-grain breakfast cereal
  - Lentils
  - Black-eyed peas
  - Spinach
  - Beets
  - Oranges

- 1 to 2 cups of caffeinated coffee a day provides a temporary boost in memory
Additional Resources

- www.asaging.org
- www.cdc.gov/aging/
- www.aarp.org/food/
- http://nutritionandaging.fiu.edu/

Resources

Contact your EAP or Work-Life Program for Assistance

Thank You!

Questions???