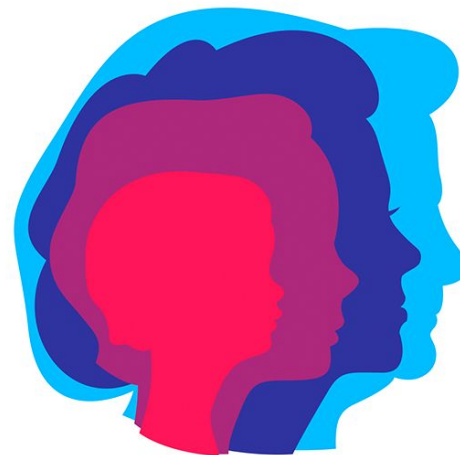


#BeingWithAging Evolution and Revolution

2023 ALCA Conference
Needham, MA

Susan Wehry MD
Director, AgingME

October 5, 2023



AGING life CARE®
ASSOCIATION
— NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER —

The Tsunami of Need
Prepare, Survive, Thrive

#BeingWithAging Objectives



Outline

Words | Perspectives |

Reimaginings | Strivings

and Thriving

Aging is a lifelong affair



Inevitable

Necessary

Ageism is too



Inevitable

NOT
Necessary

How old are you?

Ageism

Butler 1996

WHO 2021

Stereotypes

how we think

Prejudice

how we feel

Discrimination

how we act

Ageism: prejudice against our (future) selves



3 ages for women in Hollywood

Babe

District Attorney

Driving Miss Daisy

Reframing

Framing is the process of making choices about what to emphasize and what to leave unsaid. Here's a quick tour of themes to avoid and alternatives to advance.

Instead of these words and cues:

"Tidal wave," "tsunami," and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people

"Choice," "planning," "control," and other individual determinants of aging outcomes

"Seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "other-ing" terms that stoke stereotypes

"Struggle," "battle," "fight," and similar conflict-oriented words to describe aging experiences

Using the word "ageism" without explanation

Making generic appeals to the need to "do something" about aging

Try:

Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: "As Americans live longer and healthier lives ..."

Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: "Let's find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age."

Using more neutral ("older people/Americans") and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms

The Building Momentum metaphor: "Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities."

Defining ageism: "Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes."

Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions

**Lets us fool
ourselves into
thinking that
we'll never die**

**#ChangingAging
#EngagingAging
#ReframingAging**

**#AGE+
#BeingWithAging**



Positive Aging

“Older individuals with more positive self-perceptions of aging outlived those with less positive self-perceptions of aging by seven and a half years”

Jl of Personality and Social Psychology Levy et al.,
2002

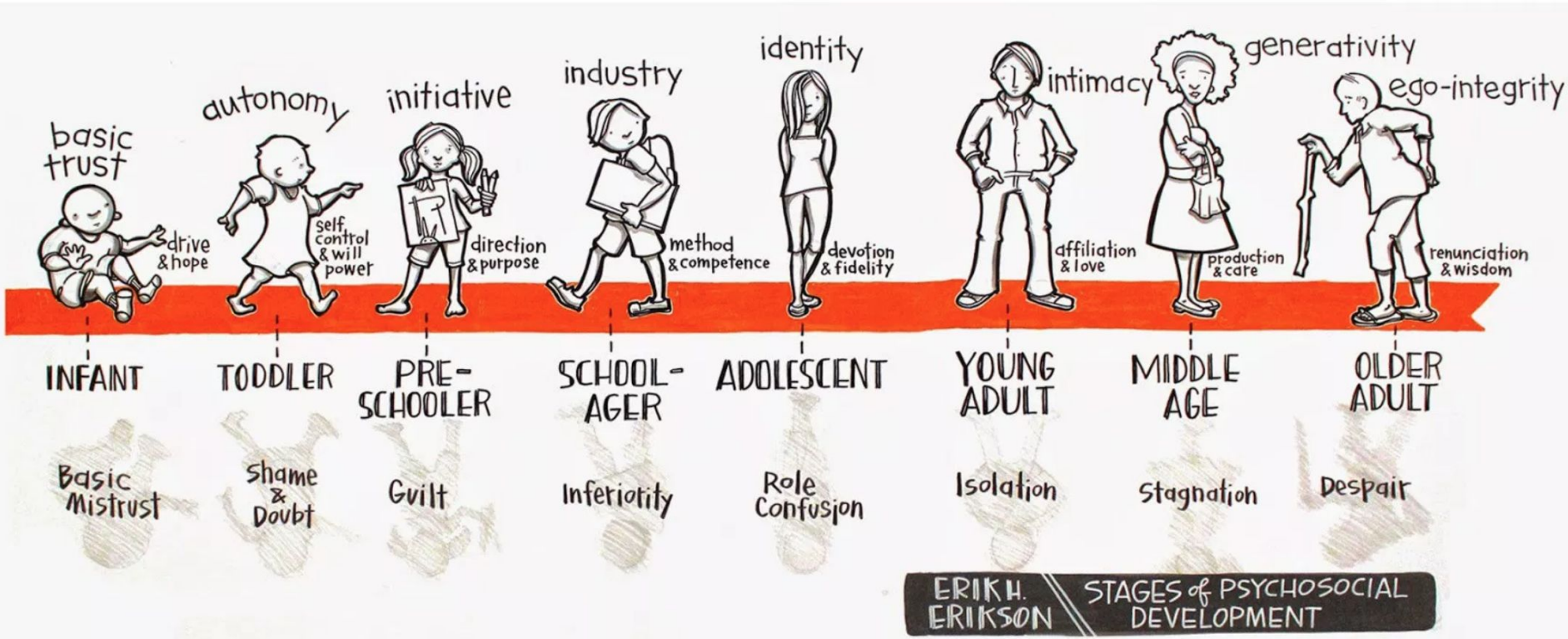
Tasks

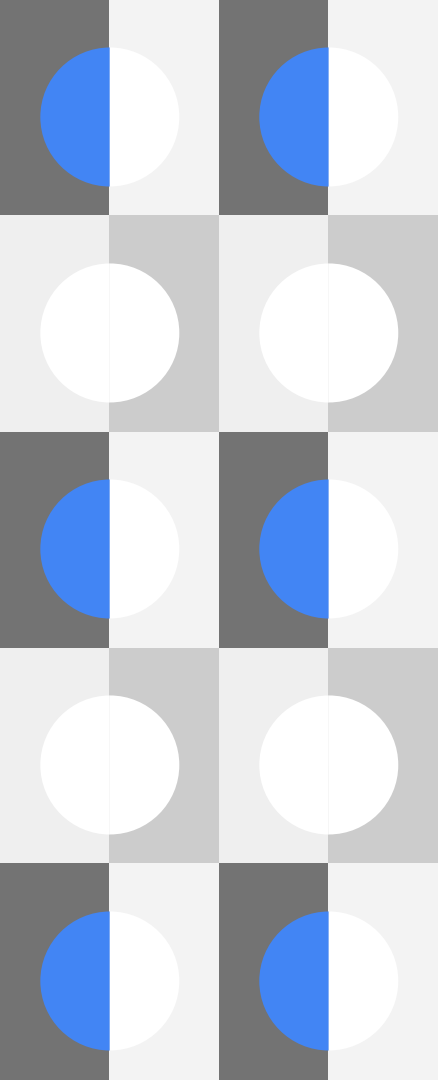
Developmental

Existential

Social | Economic

Functional





Robert Peck

Ego differentiation

I am not my job

Body transcendence

I get by in spite of...

Ego transcendence

My life ends, life goes on

Normative Aging Issues



Biological

Acquiring motor skills

Learning impulse control

Sensory changes

Fluctuating reserves

Recovery varies

Medication sensitivity



Normative Aging Issues

Cognitive

Sensory impairment

Attention

Registration

↓ Memory

More trials

Less efficient recall



Normative Aging Issues

Psychological

Positive

Resilience

Loss

Developmental tasks

Goals and values may change

A black and white photograph of an elderly woman with short, curly hair, sitting in profile and looking out a window. She is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored, button-up shirt. The window has lace curtains, and the lighting is soft, coming from the window. The text 'Normative Aging Issues' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Normative Aging Issues

Social

Change in role

Change in connection

Less visible

Risk of abuse, exploitation



Net result

Live in fear of:

- losing autonomy
- reprisal
- losing options

Anxious when decisions challenged

May minimize deficits

Defend independence

Fear of dependency > fear of death

Portacolone et al.

Independence

Remaining independent =
staying in one's own home

Accepting help at hand
Doing things alone

Having family, friends, and
money as resources

Preserving physical and
mental capacities

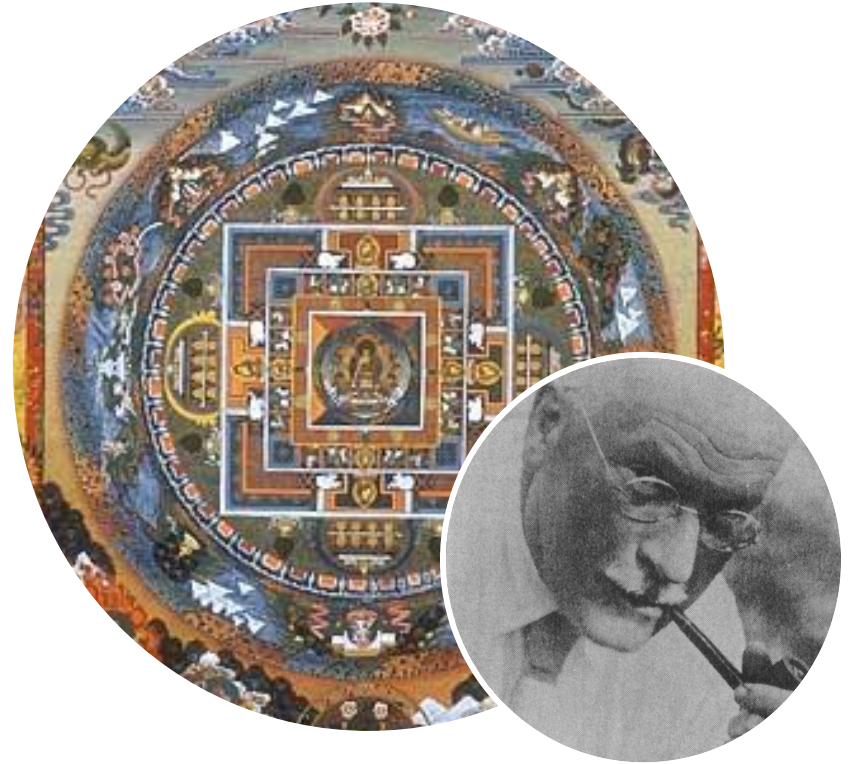


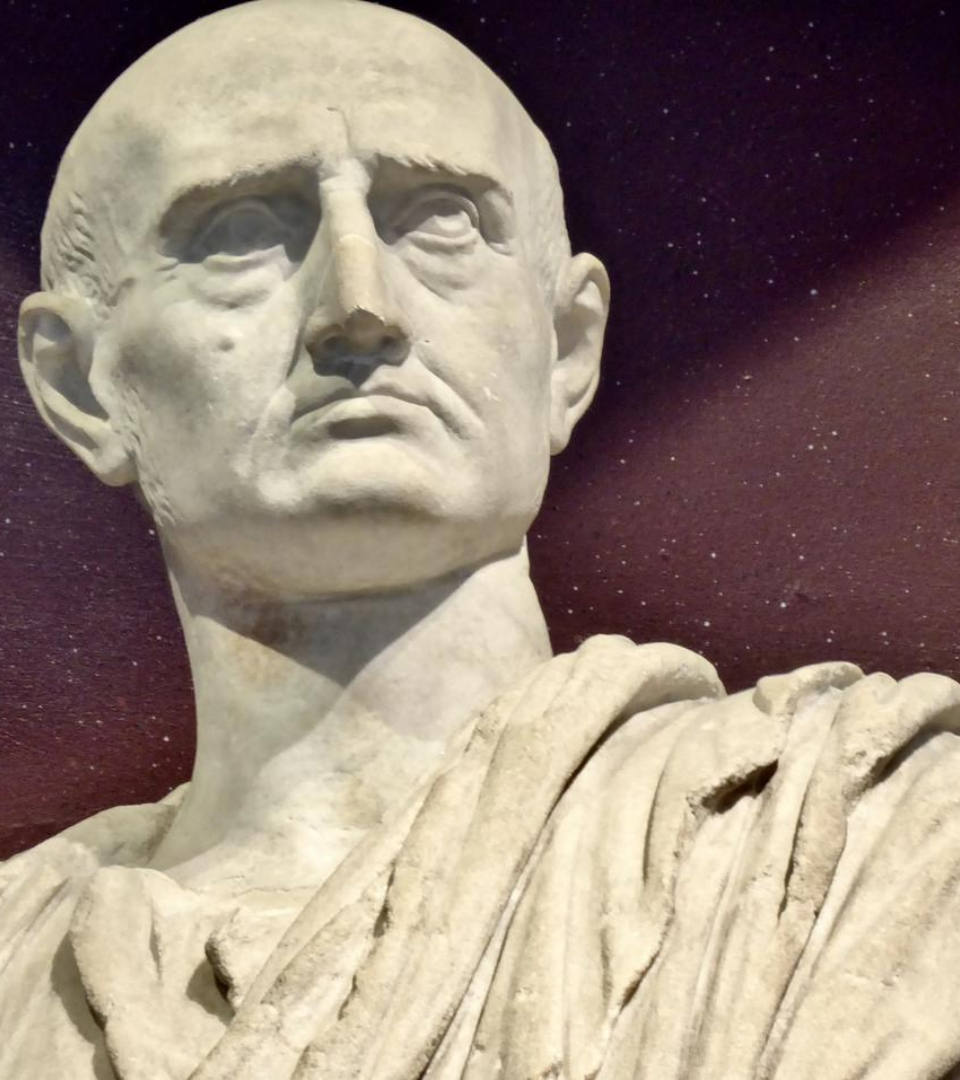
On being dependent

What To Do? How To Be?



“Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life?” Jung, C.G. (1933)





Cicero

my old age sits light upon me..., and not only is not burdensome, but is even happy. For as Nature has marked the bounds of everything else, so she has marked the bounds of life.

Lifelong love of, and search for, wisdom

De Senectute 44 BC

By our very nature, we are

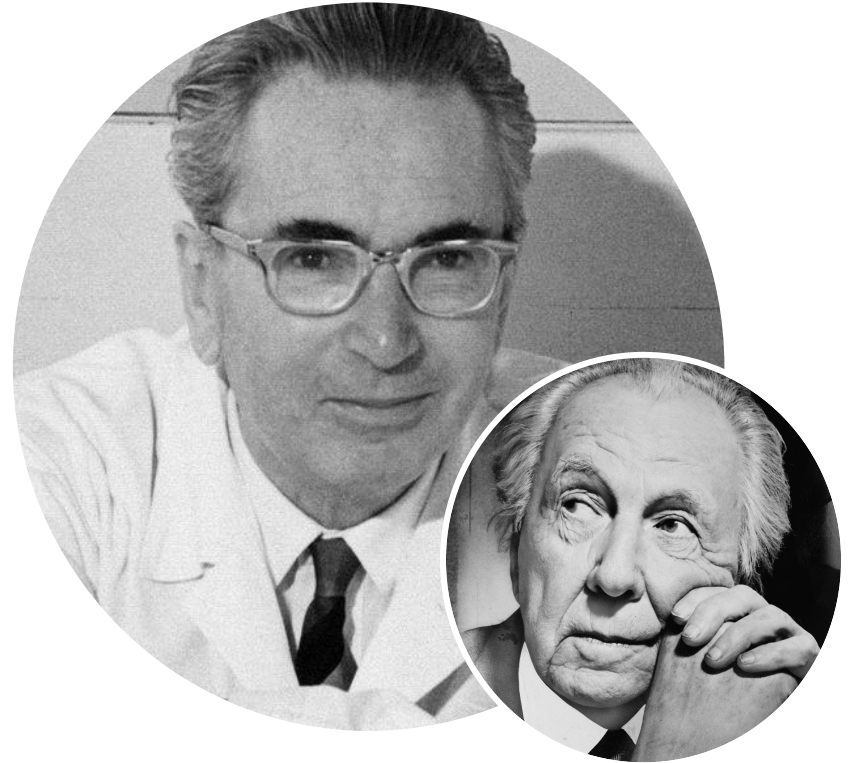
Free

Spiritual

Unique

Responsible

Driven by the will to meaning



[Viktor Frankl](#)

Poetry

Poetry, Auden wrote, “might be defined as the clear expression of mixed feelings,”

When you see me sitting quietly,
Like a sack left on the shelf,
Don't think I need your chattering.
I'm listening to myself.

Hold! Stop! Don't pity me!
Hold! Stop your sympathy!

**Understanding if you got it,
Otherwise I'll do without it!**

When my bones are stiff and aching,
And my feet won't climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor:

Don't bring me no rocking chair.

**When you see me walking, stumbling,
Don't study and get it wrong.**

**'Cause tired don't mean lazy
And every goodbye ain't gone.**

**I'm the same person I was back then,
A little less hair, a little less chin,
A lot less lungs and much less wind.
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.**

Don't Bring Me No Rockin' Chair



I curse the world that blunders into me, and hurts
But know
Its bad fit is the best that we can do.

From "A Patient Old Cripple"
Jenny Joseph, in her 80's

Non-Normative

Serious mental illness

Dementia, due to any
cause

Depression

Substance use
disorders

Abuse, neglect,
exploitation



**Bring to mind someone
with dementia
you've loved, cared for
or served**

How do you feel when you bring them to mind?
How do you think about them and their dementia?

Concerns

And

Triggers

Safety

Falls

Fear of Decline

Access to medical care

Access to services

Treatment refusal

Non-adherence

Protection from
exploitation

Lifestyle intolerance

Biomedical model

Signs

Symptoms

Challenges

Carepartners/givers

Treatments

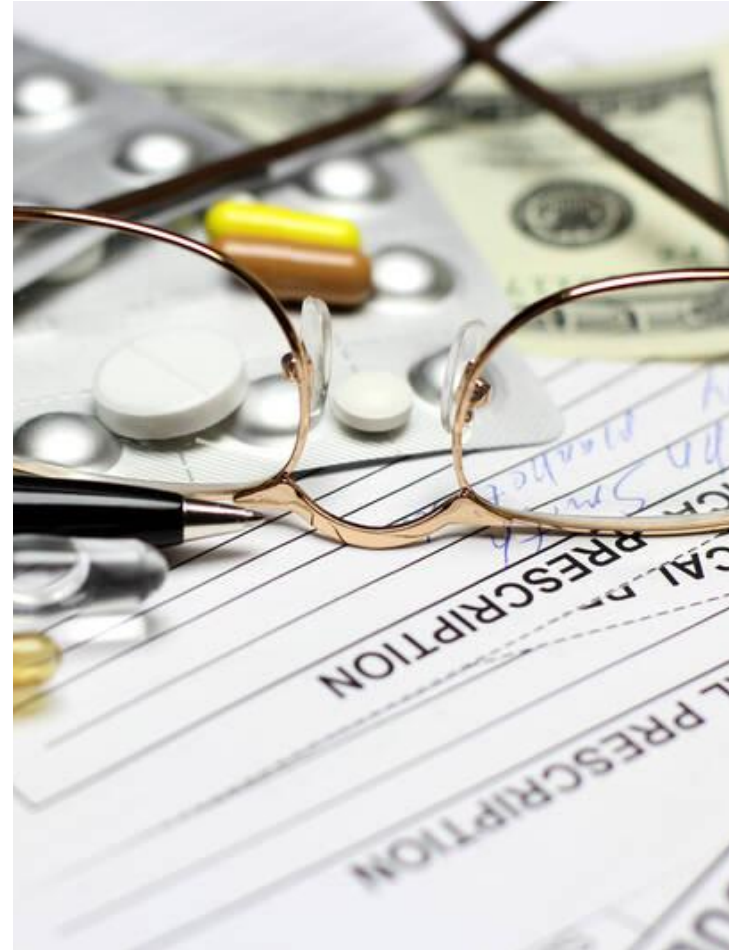
“How can I help”?

People with a *disease* are more likely to be offered...

Assessment

Medication

Plans of care focused on symptoms



Disability model

Support
Accommodations
Empowerment
Contributions

“How can I include?”

People with a *disability* are more likely to be offered...

Assessment, health promotion and remediation

Counselling and assistance with adaptation

Modifications and assistive technologies

Accommodations



Towards a dementia- inclusive society

WHO toolkit
for dementia-friendly
initiatives (DFIs)



What part can you
play in creating
a dementia
Inclusive society?

Being Dementia-Inclusive

Give voice

**Download WHO
ToolKit**

**Foster
participation and
inclusion**

#beingwithaging

Accept vulnerability

Live authentic lives, rooted in hope

Held together in *personal* and *collective* narratives

Listening to the actual voices of aging human beings is a key to understanding identity—its makings and unmakings.

Jan Baars, *Age and the Art of Living*



"Becoming Ourselves"

torn-paper-weaving, 61 x 38" © Deidre Scherer, 2014

SEABA Gallery

Thanks

For being here
For all you do

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Twitter@beingwithaging
FB @agingmegwep

