

Issues affecting the aged

[Life](#), [Death](#)



Issues Affecting the Aged Charity Booth BSHS/342 February 18, 2013

Barbara Kennedy Issues Affecting the Aged There are several issues, trends, and problems that are affecting the aged population in today's society. Not only are they dealing with the biological, physical, emotional, and mental issues that go along with aging, they are also dealing with economy and societal acceptance of the aged. There are many misconceptions of the elderly and this causes a stigma between the younger and older generations. While it is true that with age comes change, it is not true that all older adults suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's, loss of memory, senility, or stubbornness. There are some elderly people that live productive, healthy lives while growing old gracefully. This discussion will cover the topics that are affecting the aged in our communities: the biological changes including health and fitness; the overall decline in cognition; coping with death; and the grieving process of a loved one. Biological Changes People age biologically at different rates, while some seem physically fit; their mental processing has slowed; some are mentally alert but have physical impairments brought on by aging. (Beck, 2010) The changes occur over time and are not usually noticed until they have manifested in a way that is noticeable such as gaining weight, loss of vision and hearing capabilities, loss of strength, baldness, sagging skin, etc. It is at this point that most people begin to notice their age and begin to back track. For some they delve into a life of proper eating, exercise and activities; for others they give in to the aging process and let age take its full effect upon them. There are ways in which an individual can prolong the aging process through nutritional eating, regular exercise, and healthy associations. Exercise reduces the caloric

intake, reduces fatty tissues, and keeps the heart in proper condition while the lack of exercise increases caloric intake, adds fatty tissue and causes the heart to function at less than its normal rate due to the excess fatty tissues in the body. Metabolism has slowed therefore the body's ability to repair itself has slowed as well. Decline in Cognition " As the population ages, risks for cognitive decline threaten independence and quality of life for older adults. Theoretically, age-related cognitive changes normally occur as outcomes of distal or proximal life events. Distal events are early life experiences such as physical, cultural, and social conditions that influence cognitive development and functioning. Proximal (recent) factors also contribute to reduced cognitive performance in aging. Multiple serial cognitive processes including processing speed, size of working memory, inhibition of extraneous environmental stimuli, and sensory losses contribute to cognitive decline. Cognitive capacity remains intact with aging, but encoding, storage, and retrieval become less efficient or are interrupted by reduced attention and working memory capacity. Slowed processing speed can interfere with problem solving by extending the time required for older adults to perceive, interpret, select, and execute responses. (Williams & Kemper, 2012)" According to Timothy A. Salthouse's, The Processing-Speed Theory of Adult Age Differences in Cognition, " cognitive performance is degraded when processing is slow because relevant operations cannot be successfully executed (limited time) and because the products of early processing may no longer be available when later processing is complete (simultaneity). " This states that as an individual gets older, their ability to process information affects their ability to react. In most cases, mental

processing has slowed; therefore the reaction time has slowed, thus creating a delayed reaction or no reaction from the individual. Death and the Grieving Process “ The loss of a chosen partner is, for many people, one of the most tragic events that can occur. The severity of the sense of loss and grief is contingent on length of marriage/relationship, age of partner and of their children, whether the partner's death was sudden or followed a long illness, socioeconomic status, existence of a support network, and whether the relationship was predominantly happy or discordant. (Kaslow, 2004)” There are many factors that contribute to how people handle the death of a loved one or the anticipated death. Although an individual may be sick for a long time and death has been forthcoming, the reaction to the actual death cannot be predicted. In cases of sudden death, there is the initial shock to deal with then the reality of one’s situation. Counseling and family are the best avenues to help those grieving from a loss whether it is a spouse, a child, or another family member. References Beck, L. E. (2010).

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