

Lifespan development

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Ultimately, everyone ages. Age Concern states that in 1996, 5, 523 people in England and Wales were aged 100 years and over. It is estimated that by 2036 there will be 39, 000 people in this age group, and by 2066 there will be 95, 000.

And we all pretty much age in the same way; our bodies go through lots of changes from birth to old age. I am going to describe two theories of ageing, and compare them. And explain the physical changes that occur during the ageing process.

The two theories I am going to describe are the disengagement theory and the activity theory of ageing.

The disengagement theory.

The disengagement theory was proposed by Cumming and Henry in 1961 it basically means that older people gradually disengage themselves from society in ways that can't be avoided such as;

- * Children moving away from home
- * Compulsory retirement
- * Death of friends or family members and
- * Illness.

Some older people choose to spend more and more time on their own.

Because they are removed from most of their social roles, as well as society withdrawing them. This therefore leads to a loss of social conformity and a

decreased desire for social respect. Meaning that in their later life they will be isolated and have a lot of unoccupied time.

The activity theory.

The activity theory was a different approach to ageing in comparison to the disengagement theory. It was put forward by Havighurst in 1963, just two years after the disengagement theory.

It suggests that someone who has more social involvement when they were younger would become a fully adjusted older person who is still engaged in life, and has a high level of social contacts. This theory therefore emphasizes the importance of ongoing social activity. So if someone retires, it won't be such a shock to the person if they have other roles in society that can take the place of a full time job, such as;

- * Familial roles
- * Recreational roles and
- * Volunteer and community roles.

It is assumed in this theory that older people should stay as active as they can, by staying involved into as many activities they participated in when they were younger, and carry them on for as long as possible. Ultimately saying that you need to be " middle-aged" to stay happy.

During ageing we go through a lot of physical changes, as well as social, economic, emotional, and physiological. I am going to describe three main systems that are affected by ageing;

- * Cardio vascular system
- * Respiratory system and
- * Muscular - skeletal system.

The Cardiovascular System.

The cardiovascular system is composed of the heart and blood vessels. A Major change due to ageing is the decreasing elasticity of the aorta and great arteries. This happens because the aorta become less obedient there is an increased resistance to discharge the blood from the left ventricle. With a stiffer aorta, there is a more rapid drop of pressure when the heart relaxes after contraction. This ultimately increases the pulse pressure. Also hardening and narrowing of arteries increases blood pressure.

The heart grows slightly bigger as you get older, and its performance changes.

Also, blood vessels loose their elasticity leading from normal blood pressure during exercise slowly increasing as we age.

Due to ageing these problems often lead to;

- * Heart attacks

- * Hypertension

- * Auto immune disease and

- * Depression

The Respiratory System.

The spine, ribs, breastbone, muscles of the chest, diaphragm and the elastic fibres of the lung work together to pump air in and out of the lungs (ventilation). All of these components of the respiratory system are affected by ageing. The ageing lung becomes less elastic and therefore, less effective.

In a normal lung, oxygen is breathed in and passed from the lung alveoli to the blood vessels which carry it to other parts of the body. Then, waste carbon dioxide is lost in exhalation, but, in an older lung it has similar effects as a smoker's lung.

During the aging process, the elasticity of tissues deteriorates throughout the body, including the lungs. This causes an increase in breathing difficulties in older people. By age 50, vital lung capacity will have decreased to 65%.

Movement in the chest are often restricted because of arthritic changes in the ribs, this reduction in resilience restricts ventilation. Therefore limiting exercise performance and capabilities.

Muscular - skeletal systems.

During the aging process bones become thin and brittle because calcium is lost. Also, ligaments shrink and intervertebral disks flatten, and start to rub which causes pain in the spine.

The muscles lose size, shape and strength and tone, which results in posture problems.

All of these problems lead to further problems including;

- * Osteoporosis

- * Arthritis and

- * Backache

During the ageing process, some people also go through psychological changes. This could result in a number of things including;

- * Depression

- * Confusion

- * Parkinsons

- * Alzheimers

- * Glaucoma

- * Cataracts

- * Insomnia Depression

- * Confusion

- * Parkinsons

- * Alzheimers

- * Glaucoma

- * Cataracts

- * Insomnia

There are lots of different reasons why these things happen. Many people think it's just inevitable as you age, but your own attitude to ageing can affect the way you age. For example, if an elderly person decides that there is no point in friends anymore as you don't have long left, they may become isolated, and that can lead to depression.

Also, it's not just your own attitude to ageing, its other people's attitude as well. If you are constantly hearing that old people are useless and annoying, you're more than likely going to start to think that when you're old, you're useless and annoying. In general, people do seem less tolerant with older people, even though they are going through a lot of changes, and are probably confused. In society today, people are trying to encourage help for older people, which could help them, but ultimately if there are more programmes available for older people, they will become more independent and make their own moral decisions and act on them as an individual.

As you get older, your body ages a lot faster than when you were younger, lots of things can affect this, like working hard throughout your life. There are lots of age related illnesses. One of the illnesses that older people suffer from is Alzheimers. Alzheimers consists of many different symptoms, one is short term memory loss, but as the disease manifests, it gradually gets more pronounced. But people with Alzheimers can often remember older memories. As the illness gets worse, people become less able to perform skilled movements, they don't recognise people, and often forget who they are. They also lose the ability to make logical decisions and they sometimes can't plan things.

But everyone ages differently and some people won't get age related illnesses, and some people may get more than one, it depends on the person. A spokeswoman for Age Concern said: " You can have a perfectly healthy, sprightly 90-year-old, but a seriously disabled 60-year-old. It is not possible to say that at a certain age a person will have certain faculties or standard of health."

One of the things that affect ageing is the size of a persons social support network. In relation to friends, all elderly people will find that a lot of their friends may become ill or even die, so it's important that they socialise with other older people in the same situation. Some ways they can do this are;

- * Joining a club

- * Going to things like bingo

- * Or even just talking to people that live near them.

But if they do keep socialising, they are less likely to become depressed. The reason for this is because, when someone retires, in effect they lose the routine they've had for a number of years, so there is a gap that needs to be filled, and the need for emotional support is needed because of the loss of relationship.

In some cases, people resort to counselling because they simply can't cope with the changes they are going through.

When older people move into a residential home or even have home care, some get into the position where they are being abused by their carer. This can cause major physiological and can lead to serious depression, because they end up feeling useless and scared. Abuse against older people isn't just physical though, the younger generations are responsible for a lot of the abuse against elderly people, whether it's just walking past them in the street and muttering a comment about them being slow under your breath. They may be offended. Just like if someone said something to you.

Older women go through the menopause, which can result in broken bones, heart disease, incontinence and other things that are inevitable due to ageing. The menopause is a cease to your menstrual cycle. The menopause can be very stressful as it can consist of; hot flashes, anxiety, mood swings and lack of concentration.

All of these things lead to different physiological changes in different people. Some of us may experience more than others, but one thing for sure. We will all age at some point.