

What i have learned about the aging process?

Family



Reflection Paper: What I Have Learned About the Aging Process

The aging process is something that everyone will face with multiple factors influencing the progression. Taking this gerontology class has taught me different techniques to consider when dealing with aging. The knowledge I have gained about the activity theory, successful aging, and retirement will help me cope with aging in my personal life. Likewise, I intend to use the information that I have learned about caregivers, long-term facilities, and intergenerational programs to provide information to my clients in my professional career. In a prior assignment, I found that the activity theory best suited my personal outlook on the aging process. According to Hooyman and Kiyak (2008), the activity theory attempts to answer how individuals adjust to age-related changes such as retirement, chronic illness, and role loss. As well, Hooyman and Kiyak (2008) states that the activity theory is a social problem that is addressed by trying to retain social status, roles, and activities similar to those of earlier life stages. Understanding the concept of this theory will help me have a positive attitude about aging, and by using this theory I will be reminded of how the activities of my earlier life play a role in staying healthy and maintaining my social status. As I age, I can use productive roles to help assist in following the activity theory as well. These are defined as age-appropriate replacements roles that are voluntary, faith-based, or leisure type activities (Hooyman& Kiyak, 2008). Likewise, the application of productive roles will provide me with the tools needed to stay active and maintain the healthy lifestyle I currently have. I have also learned about successful aging. This topic was of great interest to me. I was surprised to learn that successful aging is a combination of physical and functional health, high cognitive functioning, and active involvement with

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society. It was interesting to learn that these factors could lead to a lower risk of disease and disability. Encouraging active use of problem solving and language skills will provide mental stimulation for the aging client (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). Another interesting point was the concept of resilience, which is the ability to thrive under adversity or multiple life challenges and turning this adversity into a catalyst for growth and development. I learned that the concept of resilience takes into account the background characteristics, personal, family, cultural, and community capacities that protect against or moderate adversity and influence meaning and well-being later in life (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). I believe that I will be one with a very high resilience especially since I have a great support system from my family and friends. I also feel like my interpersonal skills and cultural values will play a major role and help me overcome adversity that may exist in society. I plan to uphold these values into my later adult life and continue building my resilience, which in turn will lower my risks of diseases and increase my emotional well-being. As I age, I will apply the information I learned about retirement. Before this class, I had an idea of what my retirement plan would be; but now I am more aware of factors that can affect me when I am ready to retire. I originally imagined I would retire and spend my life traveling with my husband. Now I know that family roles and responsibilities, health status, and retirement income are factors that can affect my retirement plan. I recognize that I am young and have a long time to think about my retirement plan, but I have learned that having a plan sets the path for my future. I am determined to start early by setting up a pension plan or savings, which will help me prepare for my future retirement. I also found it was interesting that some older people tend to seek employment even after

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they are retired. Hooyman & Kiyak, (2008) points out that some retirees try to remain engaged in productive activity apart from paid work. I hope to be that person one day. As for my professional career, the information on caregivers will be beneficial for me. If any of my clients are caregivers, I plan to share with them the information on the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) and the National Family Caregiver Support Group (NFCSP). The information on the FMLA is something that would be beneficial for the family if they were ever in need of extended time off to care for a child, parent, or spouse. This act requires that employers with 50 plus employees must grant up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave annually. Moreover, the NFCSP provides families with information and assistance, individual counseling, support groups, caregiver training, and other services to complement family care (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). I would also share with my caregivers and their families that they should utilize the support services, which provides support groups and instructional training to help them become better caregivers. With this information, they can help their family members and provide them with the best care possible. There are different types of long-term care facilities to choose from and understanding the variation is important in making a professional decision for my client's care. I would be able to provide my clients with the information on the assisted living programs along and adult family homes. The assisted living would be beneficial to my clients that are young and old, who require some assistance with personal care and daily living tasks. I would stress that the homes are normally private apartments but has health care staff available to provide care as needed. The adult family home is an option that is available to older adults not requiring 24-hour medical care. I would suggest this type of long-term care

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facility to someone who is looking for a family like atmosphere without the larger nursing homes. (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). The last important topic I would like to take with me into my professional care is in intergenerational programming. Hooyman and Kiyak (2008) say that this is linking older people with schoolchildren, high-risk youth, children with special needs, and young families. This would be something I could suggest to my older children and older adult clients who are seeking a relationship similar to their own grandchildren or children, but are too far away for that to be possible. It is also beneficial to those high-risk youths to provide them a positive role model or " surrogate" grandparent. The Big Brother/Big Sister program and the Retired Senior Volunteer Programs are a few that I found to be very informative and a great way to get people involved (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). After taking this class, I now accept that aging is something that will happen to everyone. Yet, there are options to aging successfully and ways to help you remain healthy and active throughout the aging process. My learning experience has provided me insight into successfully aging and I no longer dread getting older. I am actually looking forward to the aging process because I am now capable of guiding my children and grandchildren toward successful aging. I also have the opportunity to become a positive role model to troubled youth or young families that may need assistance. I visualize advanced aging as a challenge. I want to challenge myself to try to use what I have learned in this class to help me stay focused on the positive part of aging. I plan to use what I have learned as a guide to provide me with the best chance to age successfully. Reference: Hooyman, N. & Kiyak, H. (2008). *Social Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

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