



## Psychosocial Consideration for Older Adults

The aging process results in many physical changes that impact the quality of life of older adults. In addition, there are many other factors to determine our overall health, or resilience: The ability of an individual to resist or recover from functional decline following common health stressors. Many changes take place throughout the aging process beyond just the impact on our physical bodies. Psychosocial health encompasses the mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of what it means to be healthy and these factors have a tremendous impact on how our bodies function and help determine our reserve: The capacity we have within ourselves to withstand stress. This article will highlight the mental and emotional aspects of our wellbeing.

Our mental state or how we think, our ability to problem solve and process complex information plays a huge role in our overall health. Everyone experiences slight cognitive changes during the aging process but a commitment to learning across the lifespan, maintaining physical activity, and engaging in regular cognitive stimulation (games, new skills, reading, social engagement) have all been shown to reduce the risk of mild cognitive impairment, delay the progression to dementia, and reduce the risk of disability. The most important factor supported in the research literature is the concept of novelty, or newness. In order to facilitate cognitive development, we need to expose our bodies to novel tasks/experiences. Go learn a new skill, take a community class, join a new exercise or social group, expose yourself to new food, language, or culture.

Our emotional state or how we feel is also a significant factor in our overall health. Depression is the most common psychological mood disorder in older adults, but is not considered a normal part of the aging process. Research has shown that as we increase our physical activity levels, our mood improves and there is an overall decrease in depressive symptoms. The fear of falling is also a very common experience for older adults, and this factor alone is a risk factor for falls. Progressive, supervised exercise and balance training with an exercise professional is a great way to become a more confident and capable mover, able to engage in life's most meaningful activities.

Improved psychosocial health results in improved levels of reserve, increased resilience, and improved quality of life. Aging adults with poor psychosocial health have an increased risk of all cause mortality, require more healthcare services, and are at an increased risk of being admitted into the hospital or staying in a long term care facility compared to their healthy counterparts. Our team of qualified therapists would love to prescribe you with a safe and personalized exercise program that will prove to have tremendous benefits for your overall health and wellbeing, making you a happier, more confident, and resilient human being.

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