Dynamic Aging

You Don’t Know What You Don’t Know About the Aging Process

Glassy Mountain Fireside Chat
Thursday, February 6

Dudley Tower, Ph.D.
Dynamic Aging

What Older People Do For Fun:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6y1e0skfJts&sns=em
Dynamic Aging

Dynamic aging is the proactive and systemic process of improving our quality of life, offsetting or even reversing many of the effects of age-related decline, and achieving our unique potential during the last third of life.

- It is based on the latest research and theory from multiple scientific disciplines – modern gerontology, cognitive and positive psychology, neuroscience, dynamic systems theory, physiology, sociology, and developmental psychology.

- It is the process by which a motivated individual can significantly improve their own:
  - Health, happiness, cognitive capabilities, and ability to control stress and pain
  - While also developing new meaning and purpose in their life, enhance relationships, become increasingly self-aware, have more energy, and flexibly adapt to rapidly changing life circumstances.
Dynamic Aging adds to the quality of life (QOL) in an already normal or successful aging process:

ALE = Average Life Expectancy,  OLP=Optimum Life Potential,  MLS=Maximum Life Span
The New Reality for a Healthy Aging Adult:

- Medical science has given us an additional 10-20 lifespan as compared to our parents or grandparents.

- Given the demographics of the Glassy population, if you are 65-70 and disease-free, you will probably live to 90 years of age or longer.

- Anyone living to 90 will incur some degree of “age-related decline” (mental, physical, or both).

- Exercise, good nutrition, social and other pleasurable activities are only the beginning of what a motivated individual can do to offset or even reverse the effects of age-related decline – and significantly improve their quality of life during these extra years.

- Taking the next step requires very little additional time commitment, but involves a “change of mind.”
Remember the twenty extra years you added to your life through clean, healthy living? - Well, these are them.
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Think for a moment about your answers to the following two questions:

1. How do you imagine yourself to be: 5, 10, 15 years from now (physically, mentally, emotionally, energy levels, activities, social life, travel, etc.)?

2. In comparison to what you are already doing today, what are you going to start doing differently or additionally in order to make this vision a reality?

Turn to a person sitting near you (not your spouse) and briefly discuss your answers.
Experience has shown that societal trends tend to follow the same acceptance progression as new technology:

**Dynamic Aging**

- Innovators
- Early Adopters
- Early Majority
- Late Majority
- Laggards

Risk-takers

Risk-Averse
“Every day I walk for 30 minutes, I drink 8 glasses of water, and I eat 5 fruits and vegetables... BUT I’M STILL GETTING OLDER!”
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Neuroplasticity
Dynamic Aging

Neuroplasticity

• Within the human brain are approximately 100 billion neurons or nerve cells. Neurons continually die off, but are replaced by new neurons through a process called “neurogenesis.”

• Each neuron is capable of communicating with about 10,000 other neurons.

• Neurons communicate by sending chemical messengers, or neurotransmitters, across a gap called a synapse – causing the other neurons to “fire.”

• Scientists used to believe that the synapses between neurons, and synaptic pathways were “hardwired” and unchangeable.

• Now we realize that synapses are not hardwired, but are instead changing all the time. We can actually create new synaptic pathways to replace the old, or produce entirely new behavior.

• “Cells that fire together, wire together.”

• “Use it or lose it.”
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Neuroplasticity

• This is why many people spend hours practicing their golf shots, playing a musical instrument, singing, playing bridge, etc. – Practice makes perfect (cells that fire together wire together).

• This same process can be used to program our brains to:

1. Become happier, more content, relaxed, etc.
2. Offset or even reverse many aspects of cognitive decline.
3. Become more adaptable and resilient to rapid and undesirable changes in ourselves and our environment.

• These qualities can be cultivated by altering our patterns of neuronal activation (creating new synaptic pathways) in response to experience.

• These experiences can be real or imagined, intentional or unintentional, or learned.
If you could change your brain to become whatever you want (i.e., happier, less stressful, kinder, improved memory, greater attention span, more motivated, optimistic, loving, accepting, etc.), what would that be?

Turn to another person near you (again, not your spouse), and discuss this question.
Old Lady Crossing Street:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovyBGfqPb1E&sns=em
Now we are going to make a switch from the theoretical to the practical – by outlining three practices using the concept of neuroplasticity that you can immediately start using to improve your own quality of life (QOL).
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We can actually become happier or more positive in our thinking:

- We must learn to overcome our “Negativity Bias.”
- Most of us have a constant stream of negative, anxious, or worried thoughts going through our minds at just above or below the level of awareness.
- These are comprised of negative childhood messages (“I’m not good enough,” “I’m unlovable,” “It isn’t fair,” etc.), worries, fears, anxiety, dread, pessimism, wariness, unfavorable comparisons with others, and many more.
- You can gradually change this negative conditioning by mindfully:
  - Lingering when you have a positive experience.
  - Recalling prior accomplishments and positive experiences.
  - Bringing to mind love/affection for spouse, children, pets.
  - Taking in a compliment.
  - Feeling gratitude.
  - De-bunking negative messaging/worries through awareness.
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What negative or anxious thoughts do you sometimes have that can lessen your QOL in any given moment?

Would anyone like to share with the Group?
“High blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, high anxiety...getting high is no fun at my age!”
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We can also offset or even reverse many aspects of cognitive decline:

- Memory, attention/focus, problem-solving capability, control of emotions, etc.
- Crossword puzzles, book groups, challenging games like bridge, etc.
- Computer brain-training applications – Lumosity, Mindsparke, etc.
- However, the most productive thing a person can do is engage more actively and meaningfully with their environment - while consciously being on the “edge” of their capabilities, comfort zone, familiarity, ambiguity levels, predictability, etc. (interaction with new people, new ideas, new ways of doing things, new experiences).
- This type of interaction actually creates new intelligence and personal development, while honing cognitive skills.
Many of you are extraverts – people who feel energized by interacting with others. Ask yourself the question: How can I engage more meaningfully with others so that I am continuously learning and growing from my interactions?

Others of you are introverts – people who feel energized by their time alone or with a significant other. Ask yourself the question: How might I go outside my comfort zone to engage more meaningfully with others – if only for short periods of time?

Discuss these questions with the first person you paired up with earlier this evening.
"Sad Thing About This Joe... Is In 70 Years We'll Be Doing The Same Thing and Still Be Bald and No Teeth and Wearing Diapers" :)

Teresa Williamson
We can also significantly improve our QOL through a proactive learning process to improve self-awareness:

- We have all undergone a developmental process over our lifetimes.

- This change has occurred so gradually, it is possible that you are not aware of how much you have grown, and how much this process has contributed to your current state of happiness as compared to when you were younger.

- Self-awareness or development is a learning process that can be escalated when we interact more mindfully with the world around us.

- It is a process of continuous differentiation, dissonance, and integration at increasingly greater levels of systemic self understanding.

- Our QOL is improved as we become more flexible, adaptable, compassionate, accepting of ourselves and others, accepting of rapidly changing life conditions, open to feedback, gain a more realistic sense of self and reality, stop “reacting” unconsciously, etc.
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Based on what you have learned tonight about neuroplasticity: What is one thing you can start doing differently right away to improve your quality of life?