

Five Things Gerontologists Want You to Know about Longevity and Aging

E. Ayn Welleford, PhD

Curriculum Team: Annette Clark, Jennifer Pryor, Raleigh Priddy, Jenny Inker, Annette Kelley

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5 Things Gerontologists Want You to Know about Longevity and Aging

1. So, what is “successful aging”?
2. Is there a fountain of youth?
3. If I need care, who will take care of me?
4. And how am I going to pay for it?
5. But really, what should I “expect” as I grow older?

Baltes' Lifespan Perspective

Paul B. Baltes (1939 – 2006) was a German psychologist whose broad scientific agenda was devoted to establishing and promoting the life-span orientation of human development. He was also a theorist in the field of the psychology of aging.

Development is:

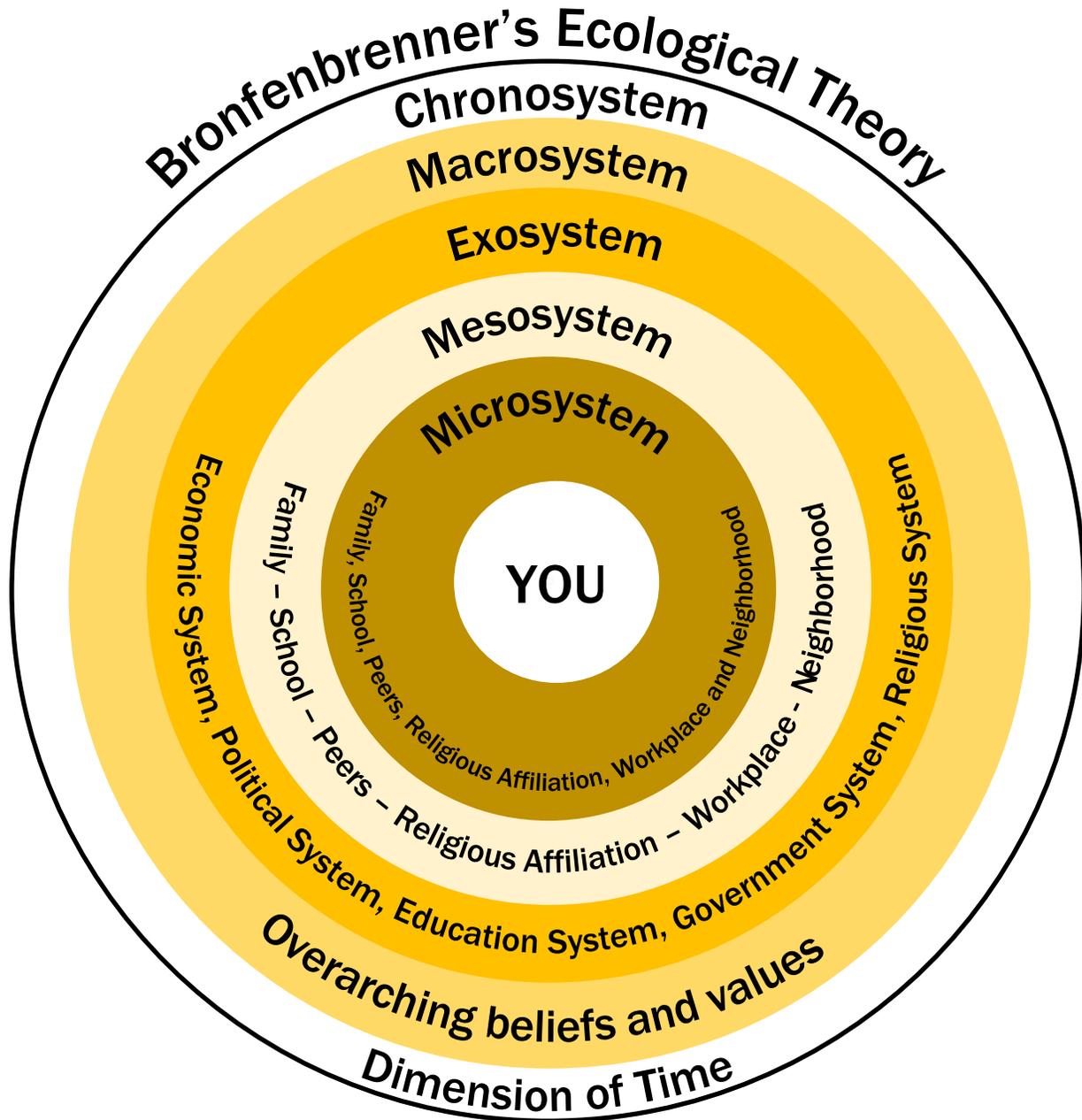
- Lifelong
- Multidimensional
- Multidirectional
- Context Specific
- Historically embedded

“...inherent in the power of stories, is a danger - a danger of only knowing one story about a group. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



The Danger of the Single Story



**Family, friends,
work,
community policy,
beliefs and values,
events in time
all influence our
development.**

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) was a Russian-born American psychologist who is most known for his ecological systems theory. His work with the United States government helped in the formation of the Head Start program in 1965. Bronfenbrenner's ability research was key in changing the perspective of developmental psychology by calling attention to the large number of environmental and societal influences on child development.

1.

**So, what is
“successful
aging”?**



An individuated trajectory?

Age

Genetic/epigenetic
forces

Social
environment

Family
relationships

Educational
opportunities

Career paths

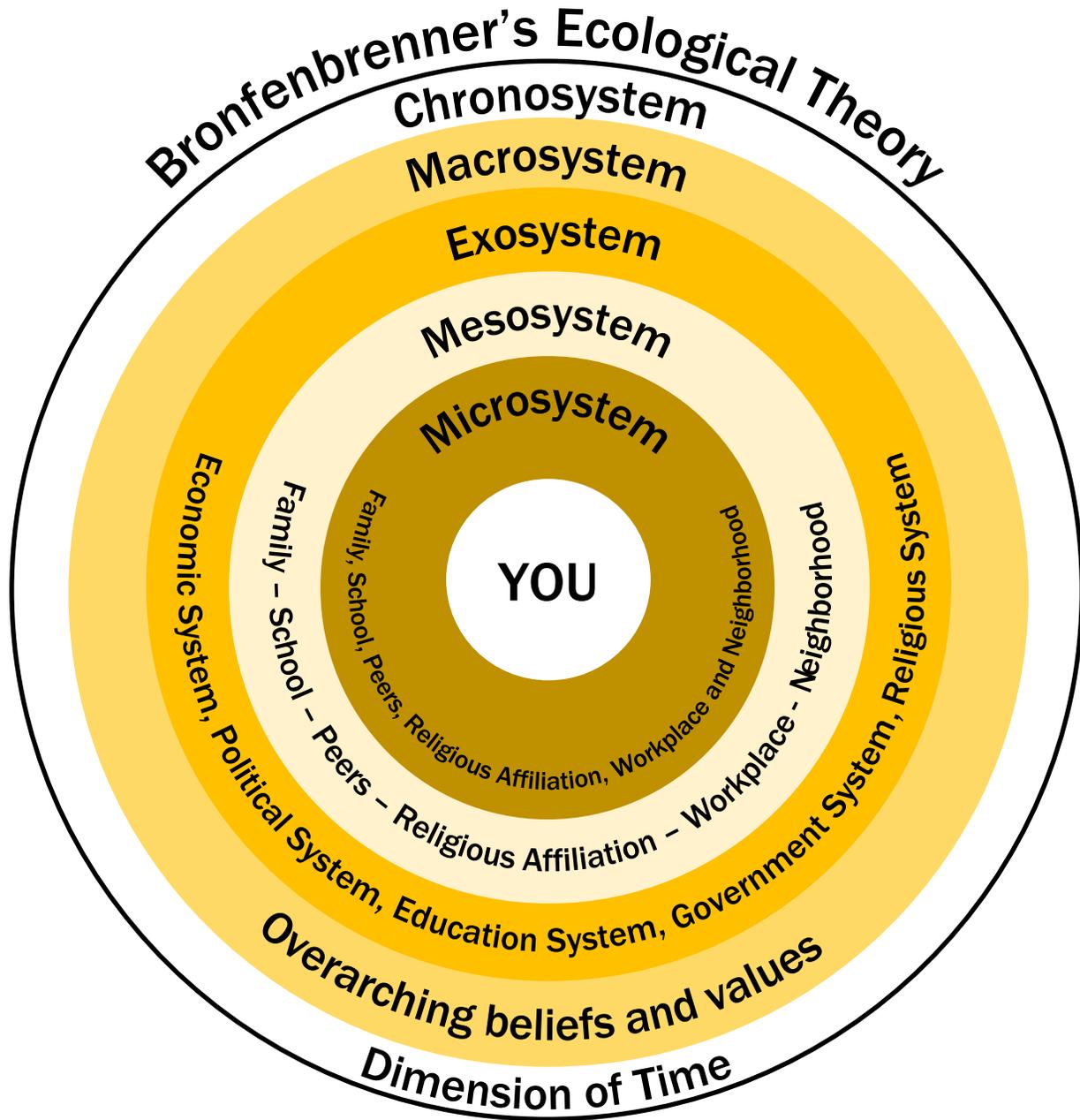
Life experiences

Motivations

Habits

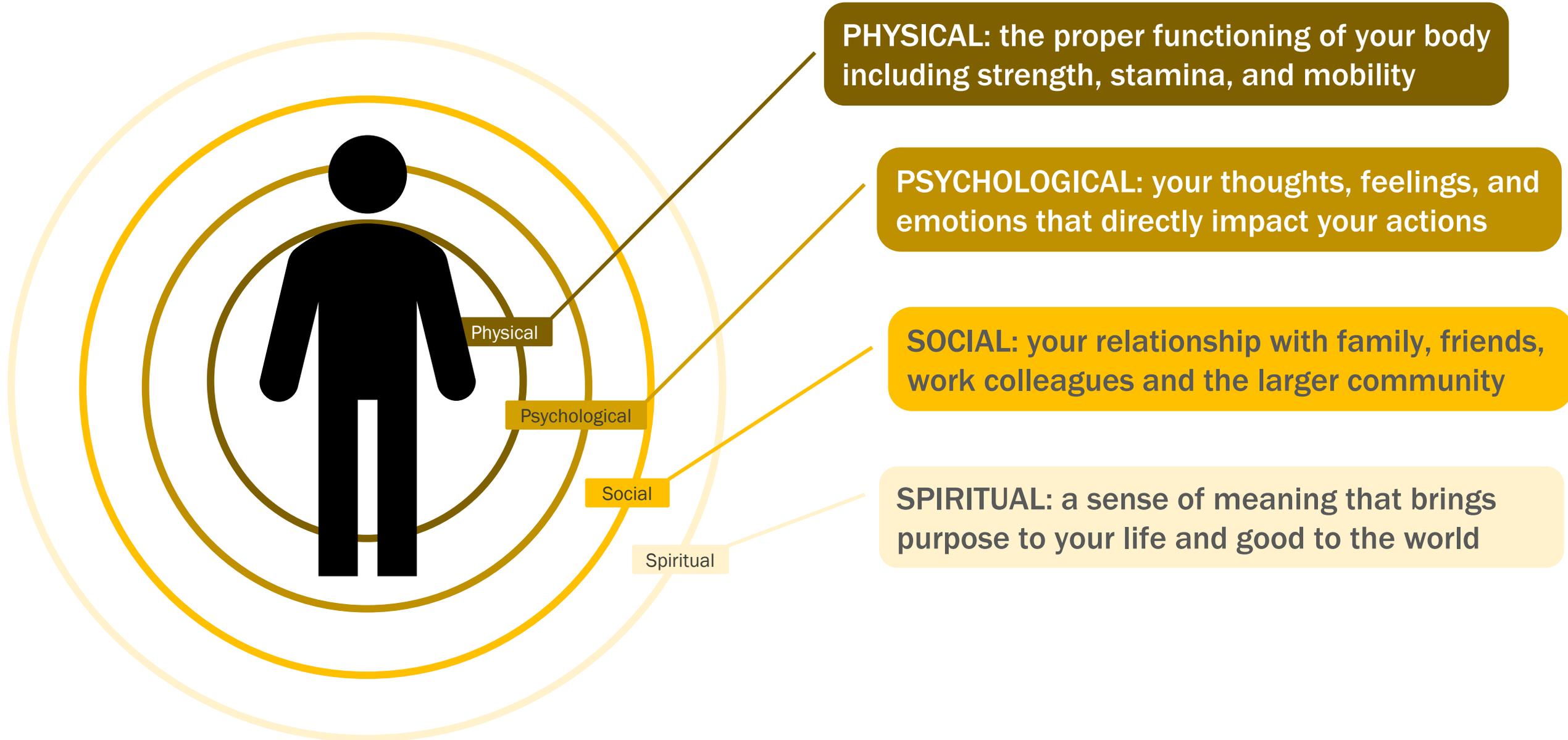
World views





Family, friends, work, community policy, beliefs and values, events in time all influence our development.

Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Approach (BPSS)



The Connectedness Continuum



Definition of social isolation:

A state in which the individual experiences less social engagement with others than they would like, and they report that this interferes with their quality of life. *(based on Nicholson)*

Definition of social connectedness:

A state in which the individual experiences a satisfying number of social gatherings, close relationships and/or satisfaction with social contacts and reports that these experiences maintain their quality of life. *(based on Toepoel)*

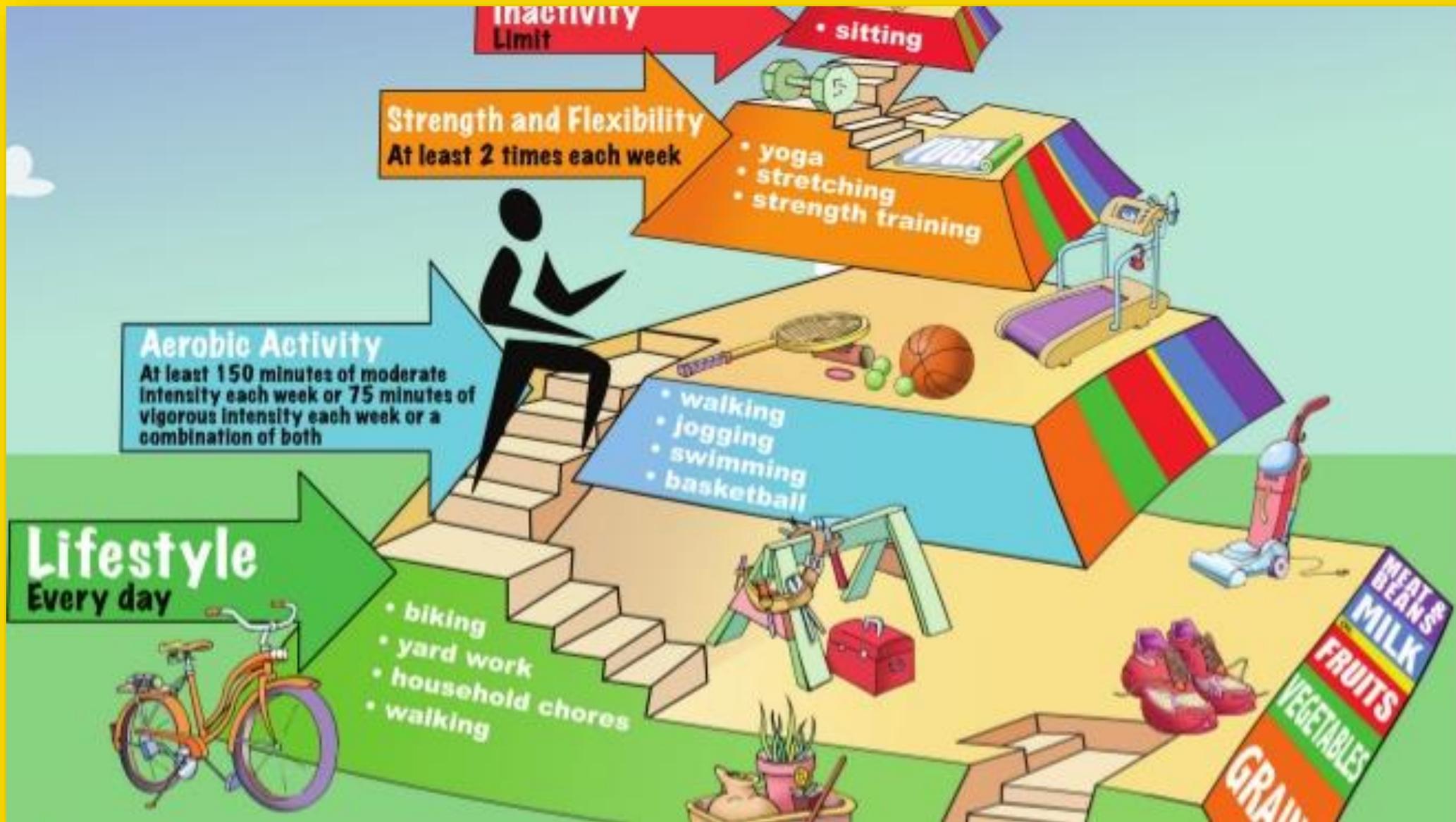
2.

**Is there a fountain
of youth?**

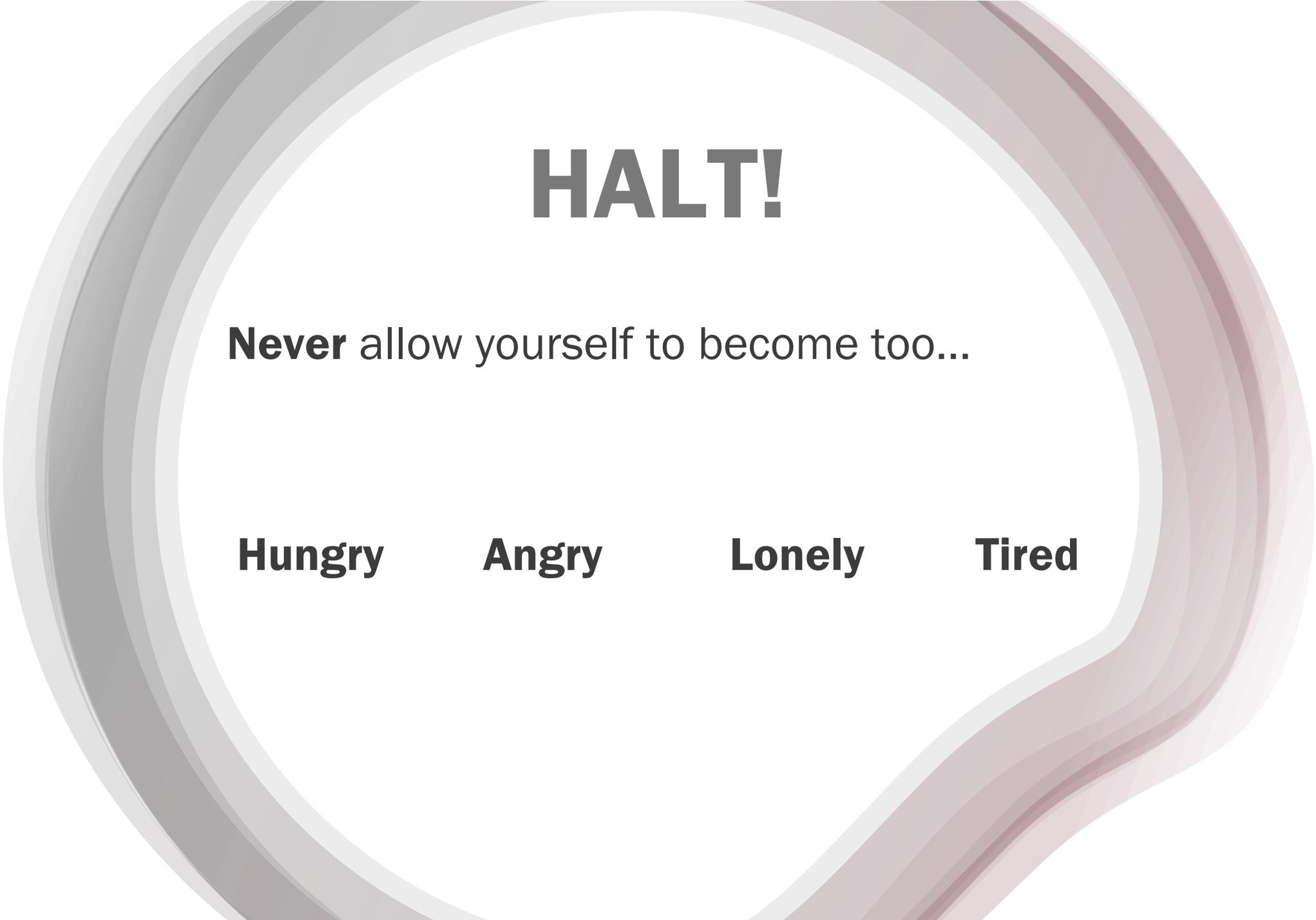


Six Components of a Care Plan

- Rest
- Hygiene
- Nutrition & Hydration
- Mobility
- Socialization
- Elimination



2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans



HALT!

Never allow yourself to become too...

Hungry

Angry

Lonely

Tired

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Spirituality

Where do I find meaning?

How do I feel connected?

How should I live?

Belief
Comfort
Reflection
Ethics
Awe

Religion

What practices, rites, or rituals should I follow?

What is right and wrong?

What is true and false?

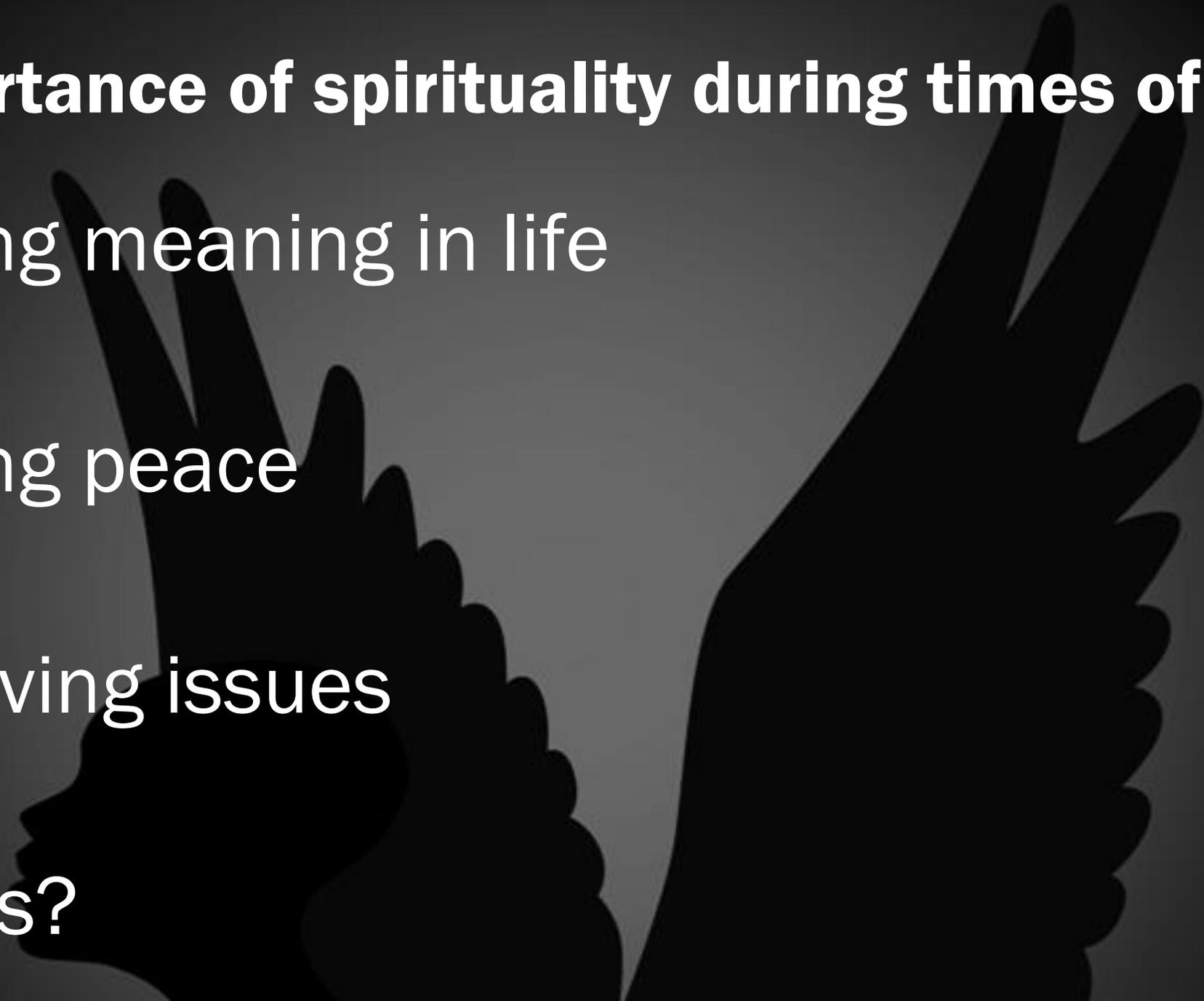
The importance of spirituality during times of grief

Finding meaning in life

Finding peace

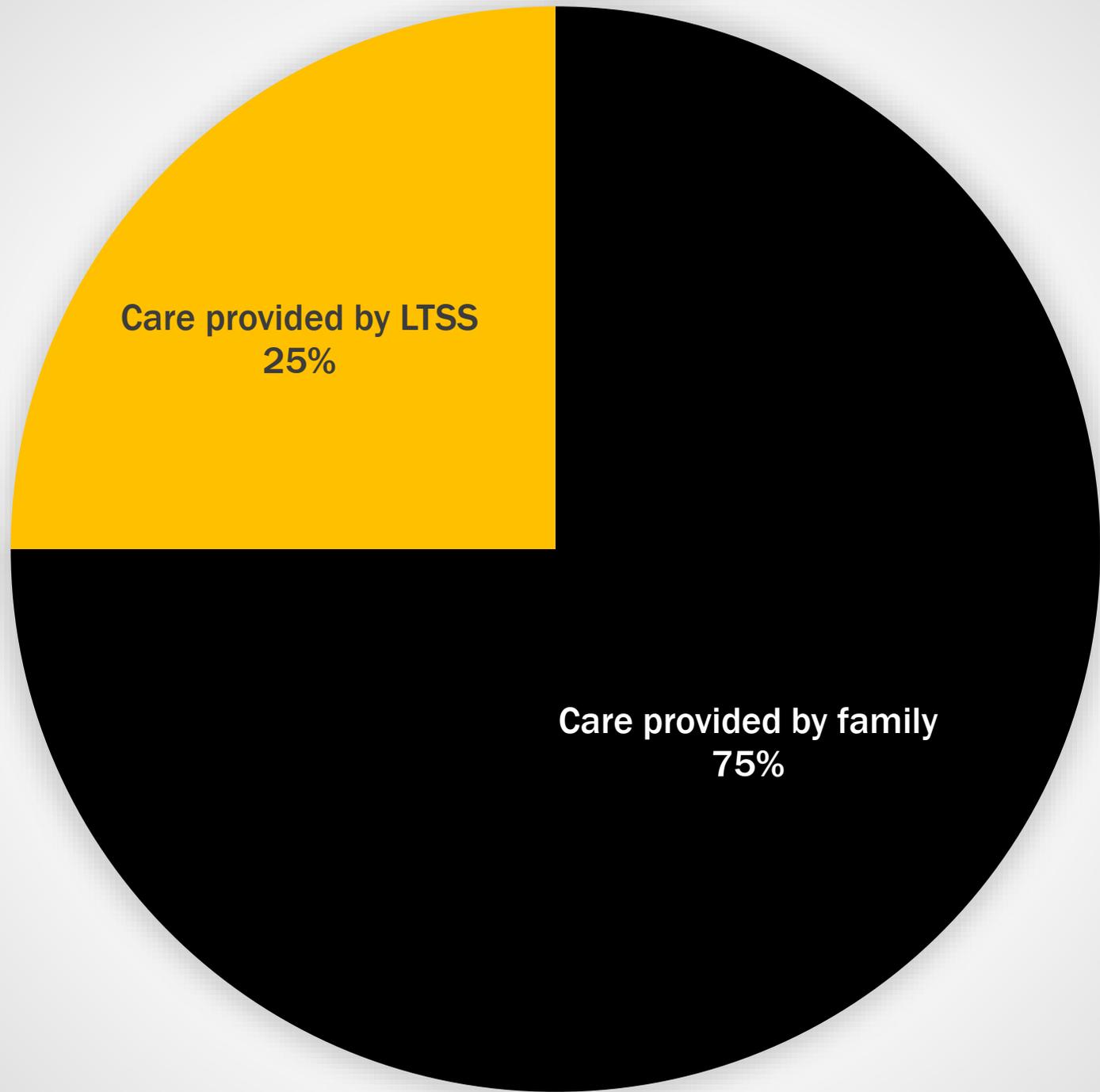
Resolving issues

Others?



3.

**If I need care, who will
take care of me?**



Care provided by LTSS
25%

Care provided by family
75%

Long-Term Care or Long-Term Support Services

Home and Community-based Services

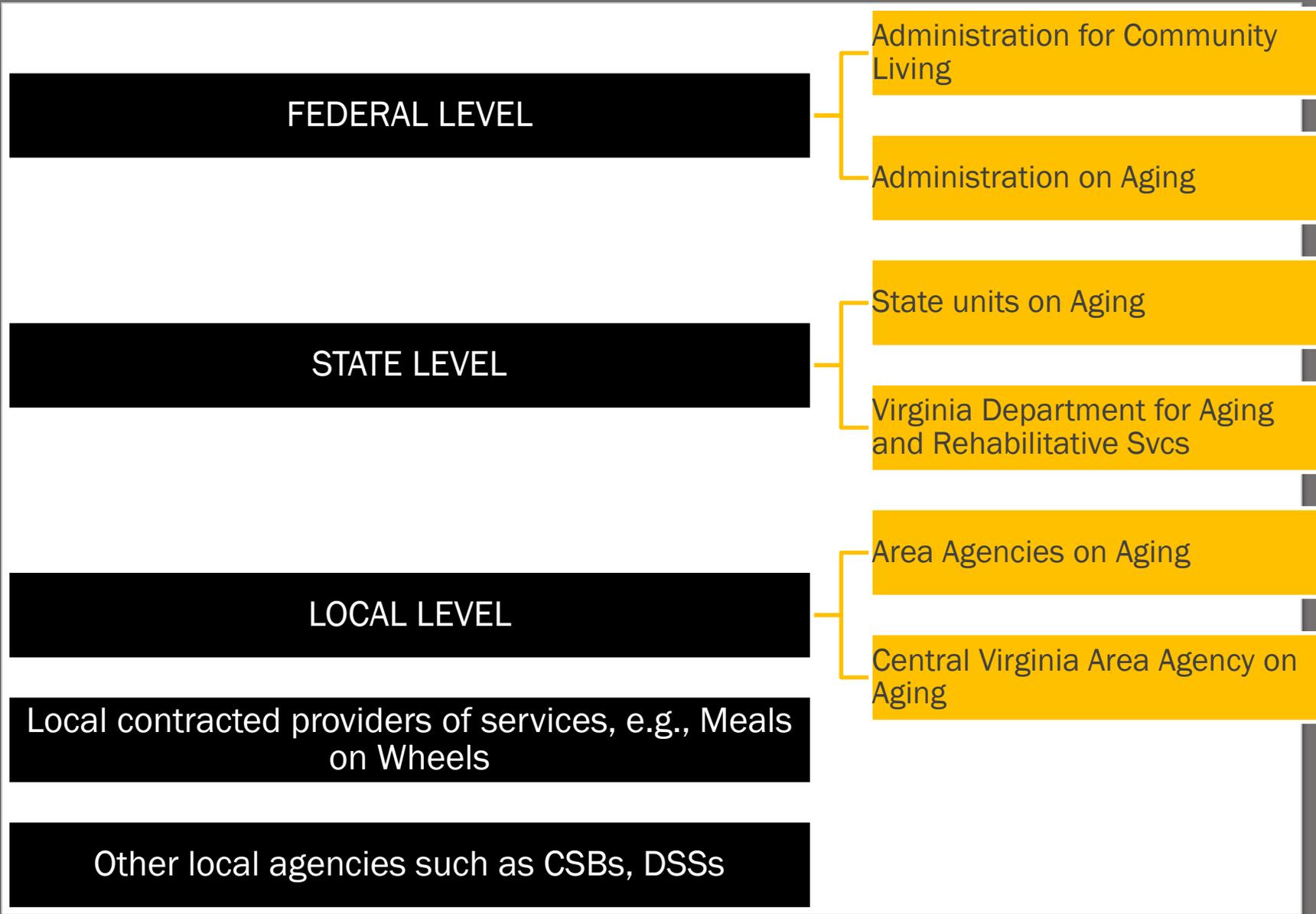
- Adult Day Care
- Home health Care
- Homemaker/Personal Care
- Social Support Services
- Home-delivered meals
- Transportation

Residential / Medical

- Nursing Facilities
- Sub-acute Care
- Inpatient Hospice

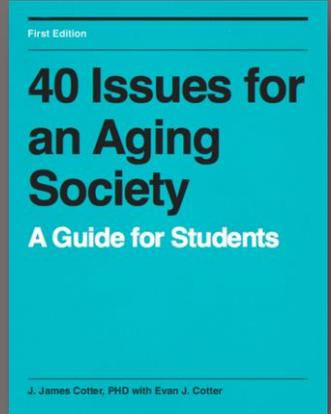
Residential / Assisted

- Board and Care
- Assisted Living
- Continuing Care Retirement Communities



The Aging Network

from:



Services provided by Area Agencies on Aging

Information and referral (I&R)



- Outreach services
- Transportation
- Care management
- Employment services
- Senior centers
- Congregate meals programs
- Adult day services
- Volunteer programs
- Home-delivered meals

Homemaker

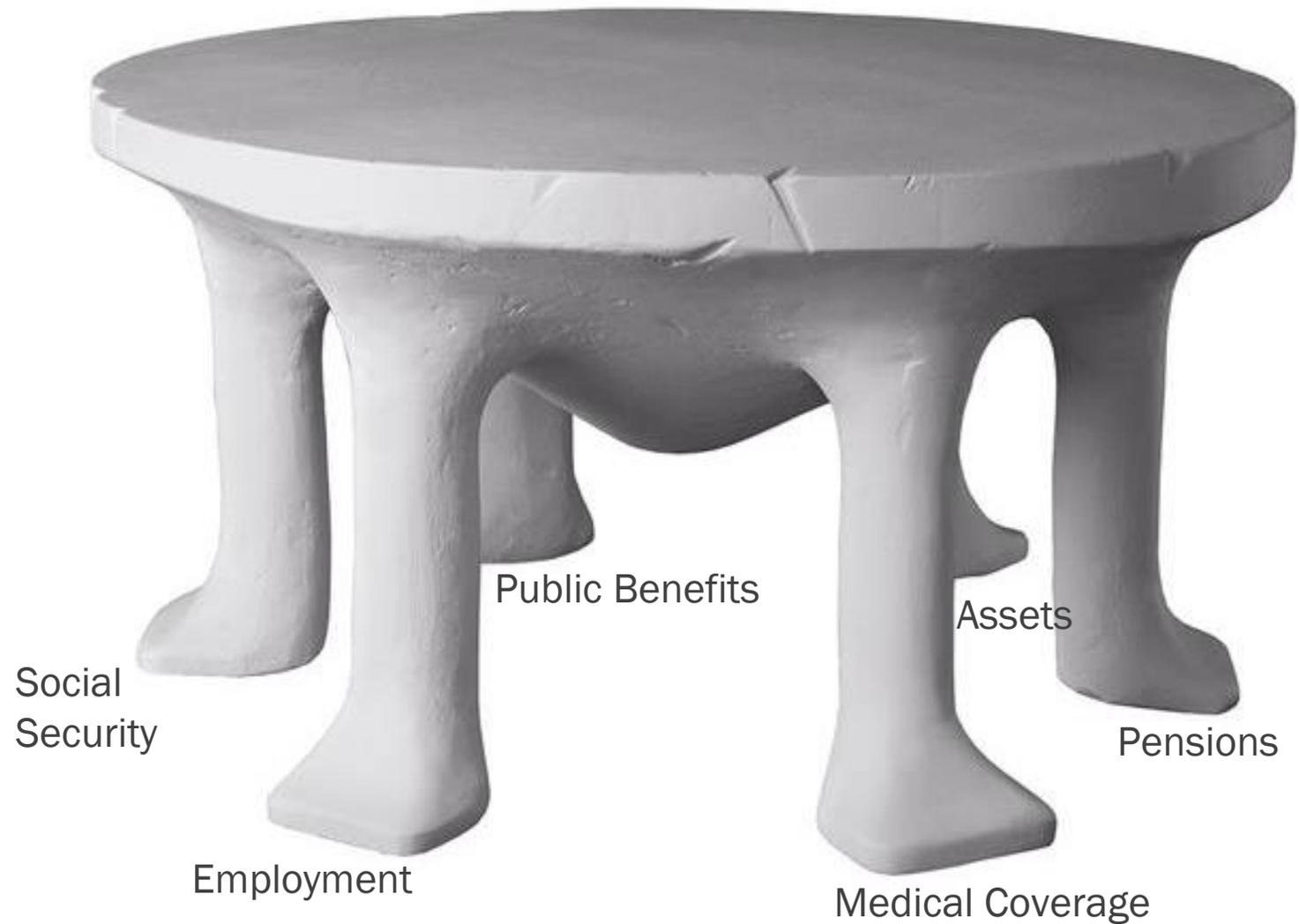
- Chore
- Telephone reassurance
- Friendly visiting
- Energy assistance
- Emergency response
- Home health
- Personal care
- Respite care



4.

**And how am I going to
pay for it?**

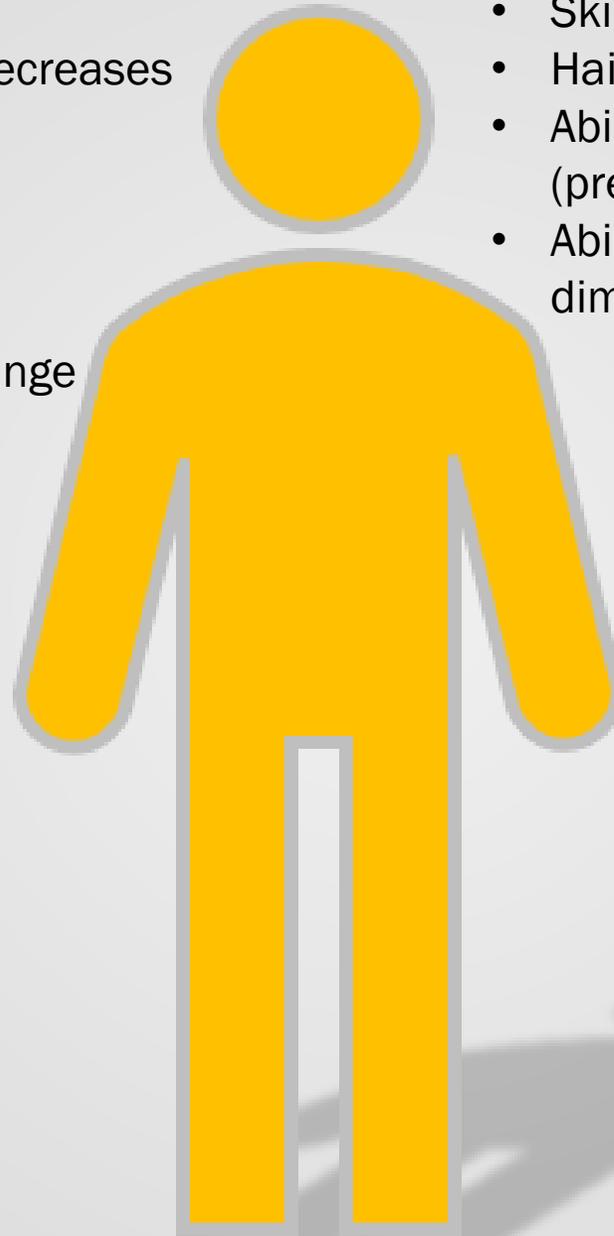
6-legged Stool



5.

**But really, what should
I “expect” as
I grow older?**

Brain size and weight decreases



- Skin/tissue becomes less elastic; wrinkles form
- Hair grays, thins
- Ability to see close objects diminishes (presbyopia)
- Ability to hear high frequency sounds diminishes (presbycusis)

- Blood vessels stiffen, heart muscles change causing heart to have to pump harder
- Vital capacity in lungs declines

- Kidneys filter blood more slowly
- Bladder becomes less elastic
- Structural changes in large intestines
- Men: Testosterone decreases
- Women: Menopause

- Bones shrink in size and density
- Joint cartilage breakdown from repetitive motion/wear and tear
- Muscles lose strength and flexibility

Learning and Memory

**Cognitive functioning becomes more complex:
we have many connections, and we have a lot of info to sort through**

Reaction time

- Slows but does not significantly impact day to day functioning.

Learning

- Reduced processing speed impacts encoding of new information.
- Retention of information successfully learned is preserved.
- Retrieval of newly learned information may be slower.
- Selective and divided attention play a role.

Memory

- Positive events are remembered more than negative events.
- Restored and retold memories are well retained

CHANGES WITH AGE

DELAYED FREE RECALL

spontaneous retrieval of information from memory without a cue, Tip of the Tongue Phenomenon.

e.g.: Recalling a list of items to purchase at the grocery store without a list

SOURCE MEMORY

knowing the source of the learned information

e.g.: Remembering if you learned a fact because you saw it on TV, read it in a newspaper, or heard it from a friend

PROSPECTIVE MEMORY

remembering to perform intended actions in the future

e.g.: Remembering to take medicine before going to bed

REMAINS STABLE WITH AGE

RECOGNITION MEMORY

ability to retrieve information given a cue

e.g.: Correctly giving details of a story when given yes/no questions

TEMPORAL ORDER MEMORY

memory for the correct time or sequence of past events

e.g.: Remembering last Saturday you went to the grocery store after you ate lunch with your friends

PROCEDURAL MEMORY

memory of how to do things

e.g.: Remembering how to ride a bike

“The Expectables”

Brain
Vision
Hearing
Gums
Heart
Bones
Muscles
Metabolism
Large intestines
Urinary tract
Sexual health
Skin

12
(Biological) Expectable Changes

Muscle mass & bone density
Balance and range of motion
Happiness increases
Well-being improves
Positive mindset is more common
Reduced stress
Empathy
Emotional regulation
Semantic memory
Procedural memory
Decision making
Integrative thought
Executive functioning
Wisdom of experience
Storytelling
Self-confidence

Sweet 16:
BPSS Expectable Changes

Improvements with age...



Wisdom



**Well Being &
Happiness**



**Emotional
Regulation**

Emotional Regulation and Experience

Older adults are better able to regulate emotions!

- Fewer negative emotional experiences (anger)
- Greater emotional control
- Sustained levels of Positive Affect
- More complex emotional experiences
- Positivity effect for personal memory



Emotional Well-Being

**Positive
emotions**



**Negative
emotions**



**Faster recovery from illness
Better physical health
Stronger social relationships**

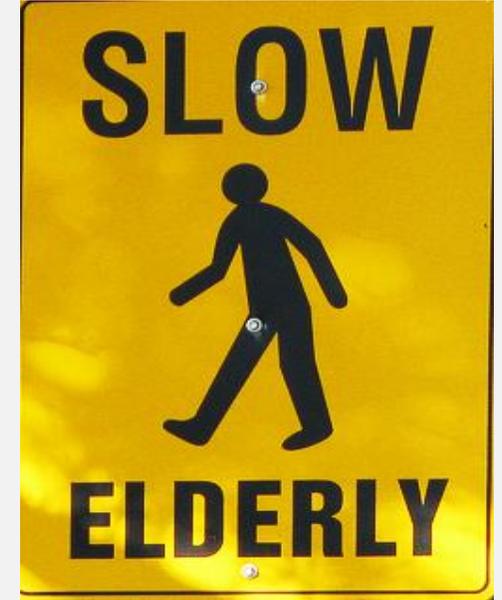
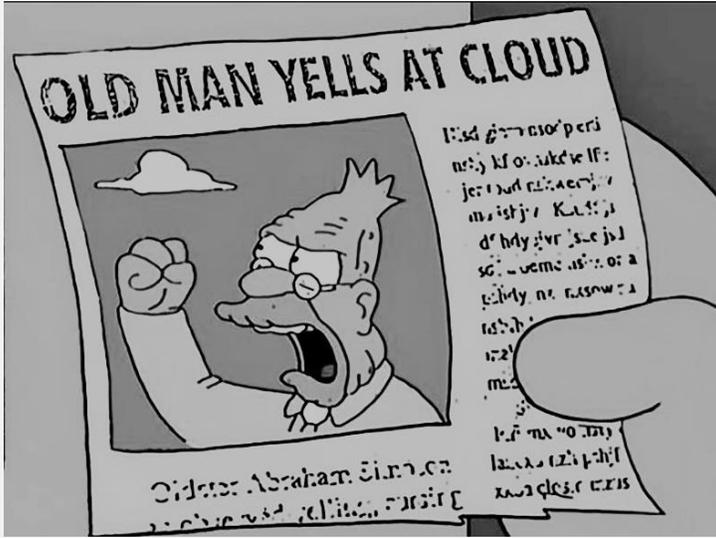
Let's talk about "Senior Moments"

"Senior moment"

"Senile"

"I'm tired of showing you how to use the GPS"

"Dr. Dan Johnson, a senior citizen, continues to maintain a vigorous practice despite his age."



Ageist stereotypes

“older adults are slow, grumpy, and set in their ways”.

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Office of Continuing and
Professional Education

LONGEVITY PROJECT



for a greater Richmond

Senior Connections

The Capital Area Agency on Aging
The Resource for Aging Well



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(804) 828-1565



agingstudies@vcu.edu



<https://gerontology.chp.vcu.edu/>