



# ***Optimizing Successful Aging: An Integrative Approach***

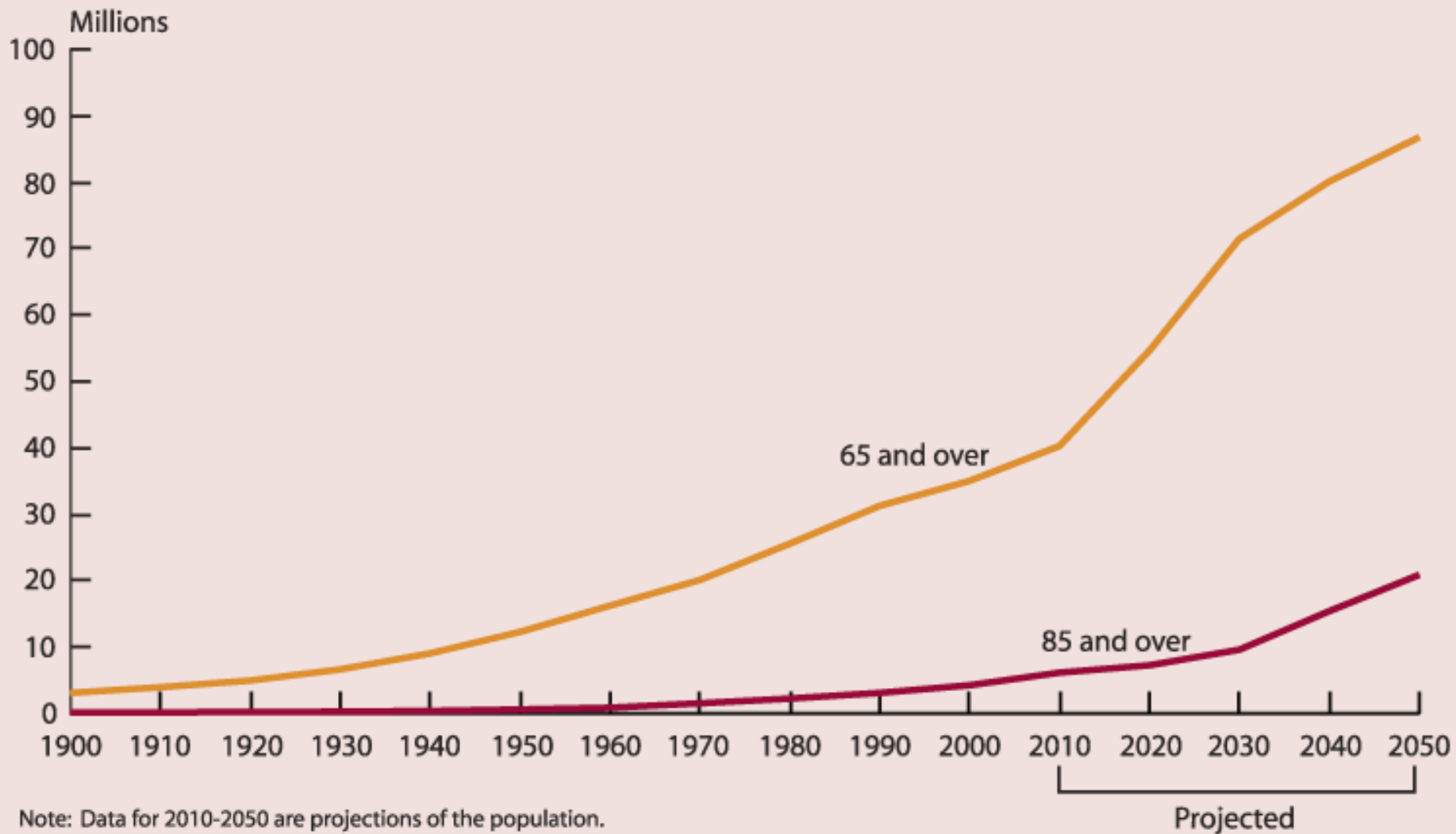
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## Number of people age 65 and over, by age group, selected years 1900-2000 and projected 2010-2050



Note: Data for 2010-2050 are projections of the population.  
Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Projections.

# *Common Views About Aging*

- Changes that come with aging are all *negative* (“going downhill”).
- Aging-related processes are not amenable to *intervention* (“running its course”).
- Aging-related changes are *irreversible* (“losses are permanent”).

## Aging Minds ...



Superman in his later years

## *A New Perspective*

- “Because of declines in *disability rates* and increases in *active life expectancy*, more and more adults experience ***successful aging***” (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).
- *People’s lives do not only have more years, but the given years also have **more life.***



## **Bill Hamm**

Age: 72

Retired, U.S. Air Force

Competing in triathlons

## **Claire Willi**

Age: 100 yrs, 5 months

Takes a dance class every day and “is as elegant as she is energetic.”





# ***Optimizing Successful Aging***

- **What is successful aging?**
- **Reasons why it is meaningful to talk about successful aging?**
- **How can successful aging be achieved?**



# *Optimizing Successful Aging*

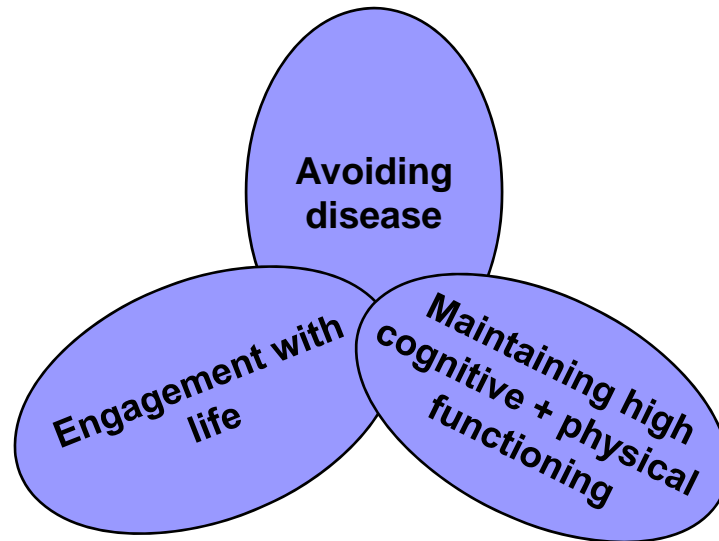
- *Normal* (primary) aging
- vs. *Pathological* (secondary) aging
- vs. *Successful* aging

# Optimizing Successful Aging

## ■ **Successful aging**

□ Aging that is characterized by

- Low risk of disease and disease-related disability
- High mental and physical function; and
- Active social and productive engagement with life.



# *Why is it Meaningful to Talk about Successful Aging?*

- To be old does **not** (necessarily) mean to be sick.
- The prevalence of certain **age-related diseases** has declined (e.g., cardiovascular disease, stroke).
- Not only has life expectancy increased, but the period of **active life expectancy** has increased.
- Overall **disability rate** in older adults has declined.



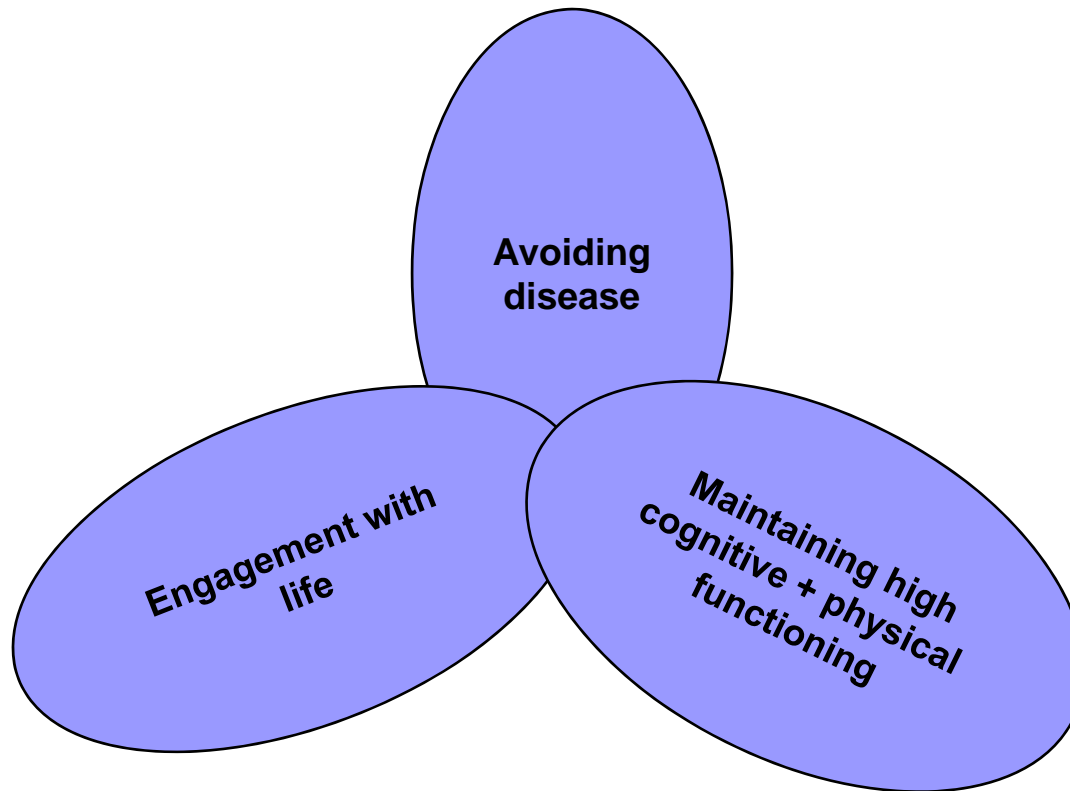
# ***Why is it Meaningful to Talk about Successful Aging?***

- Greater knowledge about ***lifestyle factors*** and how they impact the aging process.
- Greater knowledge about the ***psychological factors*** that affect the aging process (e.g., learning, emotion regulation, coping skills).

# *Why is it Meaningful to Talk about Successful Aging?*

- Greater knowledge about *human plasticity*; that is, the *reserve capacities* that humans can activate.
  - Human plasticity: *Neurogenesis* = Formation of new neurons in the brain due to increased physical exercise.
  - Certain processes of aging can not only be slowed down, but they can be *reversed*.

# ***Optimizing Successful Aging***



# Avoiding Disease



# Optimizing Successful Aging

## Avoiding Disease

- Can not eliminate the effects of our *genetic endowment*, yet!
- However, even the human genome has a certain *plasticity* that scientists are just starting to understand.
- Evidence supporting the importance of *environmental factors*:
  - Research on the effects of *physical activity* → physical and psychological benefits
  - Research on the effects of *healthy nutrition*.
  - Research on the effects of *healthy self-care habits* → stress management, sleep hygiene, tobacco and alcohol consumption

# Optimizing Successful Aging

## Effects of Physical Activity

### ■ Risks of physical *inactivity*:

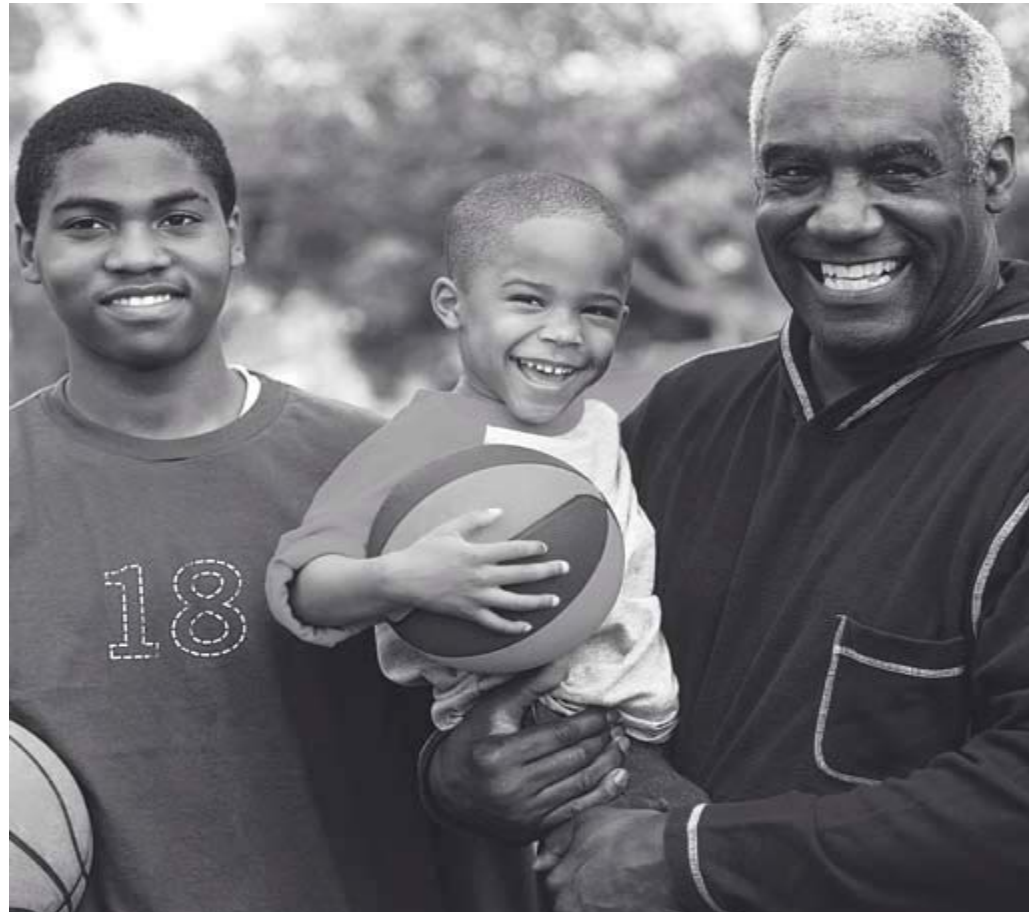
- 45% greater risk of developing coronary artery disease
- 60% greater risk of developing osteoporosis
- 40% greater likelihood to develop colon cancer

### ■ Benefits of physical *activity*:

- Improved muscle coordination, reaction time, strength, balance and stability → reduced risk for falls
- HDL (good) cholesterol increases an average of 4.6% with exercise
- Increased bone size and bone density → less bone loss and osteoporosis
- Aerobic exercise prompts the release of mood lifting hormones that promote a sense of well-being and reduce stress
- In studies of women already being treated for breast cancer, moderate physical activity cut rates of recurrence and death in half.

# *Optimizing Successful Aging*

## **Engagement with Life**



# Optimizing Successful Aging

## Engagement with Life

- Leading an *active life*
  - Develop areas of interest and nurture them
  - Be open to new experiences → lifelong learning
- Form and cultivate meaningful and emotionally rewarding *relationships*
  - Notion of the “social convoy”
  - Importance of a social support network
  - Importance of close relationships
- Engage in *productive activities*
  - Be involved in your community (i.e., volunteer) → Experience Corps
  - Age productively (i.e., never stop learning)
  - Older adults as a “natural resource”

# ***Optimizing Successful Aging***

## **Maintaining High Cognitive Functioning**

- Predictors of ***successful intellectual aging*** as identified in the Seattle Longitudinal Study (Schaie, 2005):
  - Absence of cardiovascular and other chronic diseases
  - Living in favorable environmental circumstances
  - Involvement in cognitively challenging activities
  - Self-report of a flexible personality
  - Satisfaction with one's life accomplishments in midlife or early old age

# *Optimizing Successful Aging*

## **Maintaining High Physical Functioning**



# Optimizing Successful Aging

## Maintaining High Physical Functioning

- Staying *physically active*
  - Avoiding impairment and disability due to *disuse*
  - Don't be a couch potato!
- Adopting *healthy habits*
  - Maintain optimal body weight
  - Eat healthy food--and don't supersize
  - Control the amount and duration of stress
  - Drink alcohol in moderation
  - Don't smoke tobacco
  - Adopt good sleeping habits (amount and quality)
- Have regular *medical check-ups*
  - Health care should be preventive rather than curative
  - Recognize health problems before they become a disease

# *Optimizing Successful Aging*

- Successful aging *does not* begin at age 60!
- Whether a person ages successfully or not is, to a good extent, determined by *lifelong behaviors and choices*—many of which are adopted at an earlier point in life.
- Need to take a lifespan approach to successful aging—or more broadly speaking to *successful human development*.



***The bottom line:***

***Successful aging is not  
for Sissies!!!***





# ***Aging Research Colloquium Series (ARCS)***

**When:** The second Monday of each month from  
12:00 – 1:00 pm

**Where:** Lory Student Center, CSU Campus

For a complete ARCS schedule, please visit:

<http://www.caahs.colostate.edu/Events/Item/?ID=104>



***Thank you!***