



Aging Well Faith, Meaning, and Deep Connections

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People are living longer and the needs of the silver generation are growing and increasingly noticed.

As people age, they go through many significant changes and need understanding, guidance, and help.

This is the season in life when there are significant milestones such as retirement, empty nest, illnesses, loneliness.

We shall deal with a few key thoughts in providing help to seniors.

FAITH

Faith has to do with one's beliefs and convictions. These often have a religious dimension.

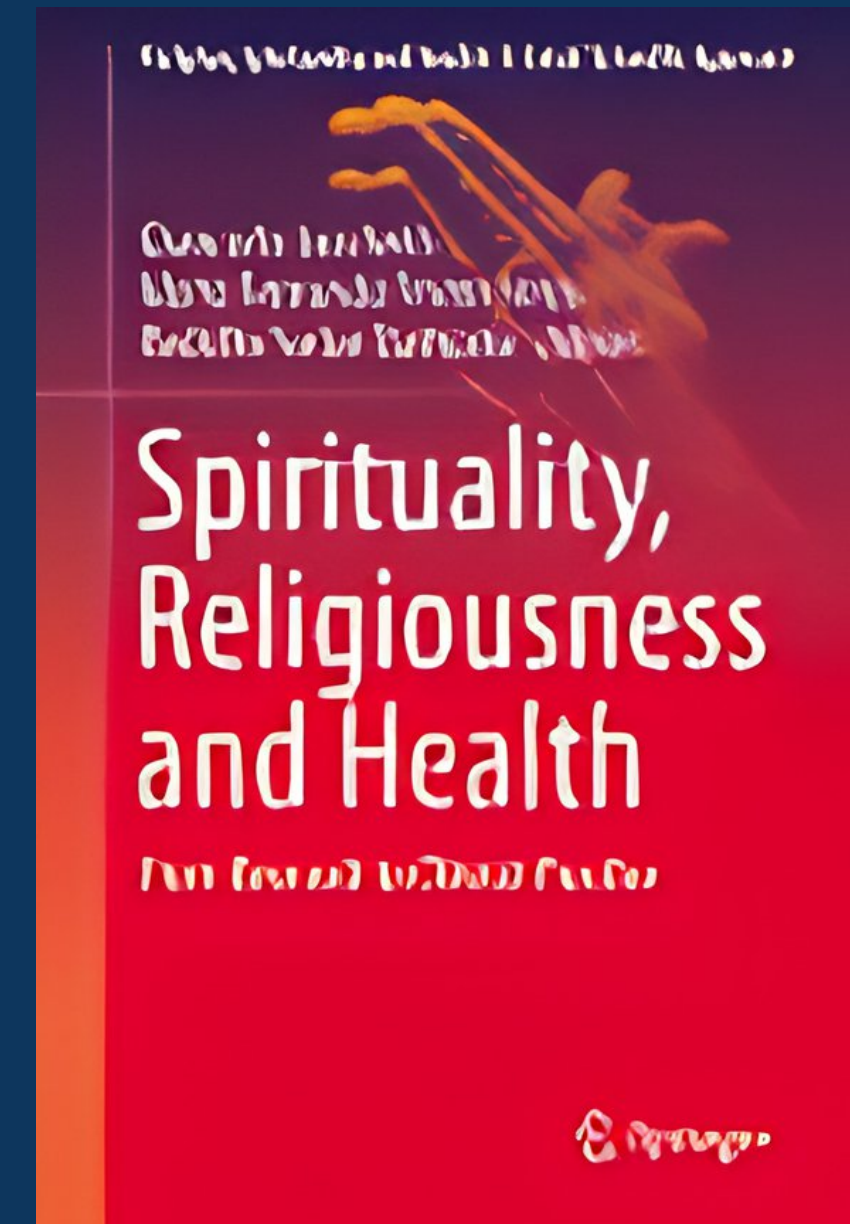
Life is best seen in a holistic way – physical, psychological, social, and religious dimensions.

Often, the faith dimensions are neglected as if they are not important.

Doctors are urged to remember this and have developed history taking that incorporates faith beliefs.

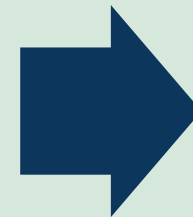
FAITH and WELLBEING

- There are many studies that show the importance of religion and spirituality in seniors. An example is Spirituality, Religiousness and Health, vol 4. edited by G. Lucchetti et al.
- The authors conclude: “Health professionals dealing with older persons should be aware of the spiritual and religious beliefs of patients in order to provide a more comprehensive and holistic care.”



FAITH – FICA Questionnaire

F: “Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious? What beliefs or values give your life meaning?”



I: “How important is spirituality in your life, and how has it influenced your health choices?”



A: “How would you like me to address these spiritual matters in your care?”



C: “Are you part of a spiritual or support community, and how does it help you?”

FAITH: HOPE Template

HOPE

sources of Hope, Organised religion, Personal spirituality and practices, Effects on medical care, developed by Dr Gowri Anandarajah and E. Hight).



FAITH

Faith helps to find directions, meaning, community, and spiritual resources for aging well.



MEANING

- Life is like a story that lasts a lifetime. To find meaning in this story brings purpose, significance and satisfaction.
- “Meaninglessness is the state of being empty of such purpose or value, often described as futility, absurdity, or emptiness” (Cambridge Dictionary).



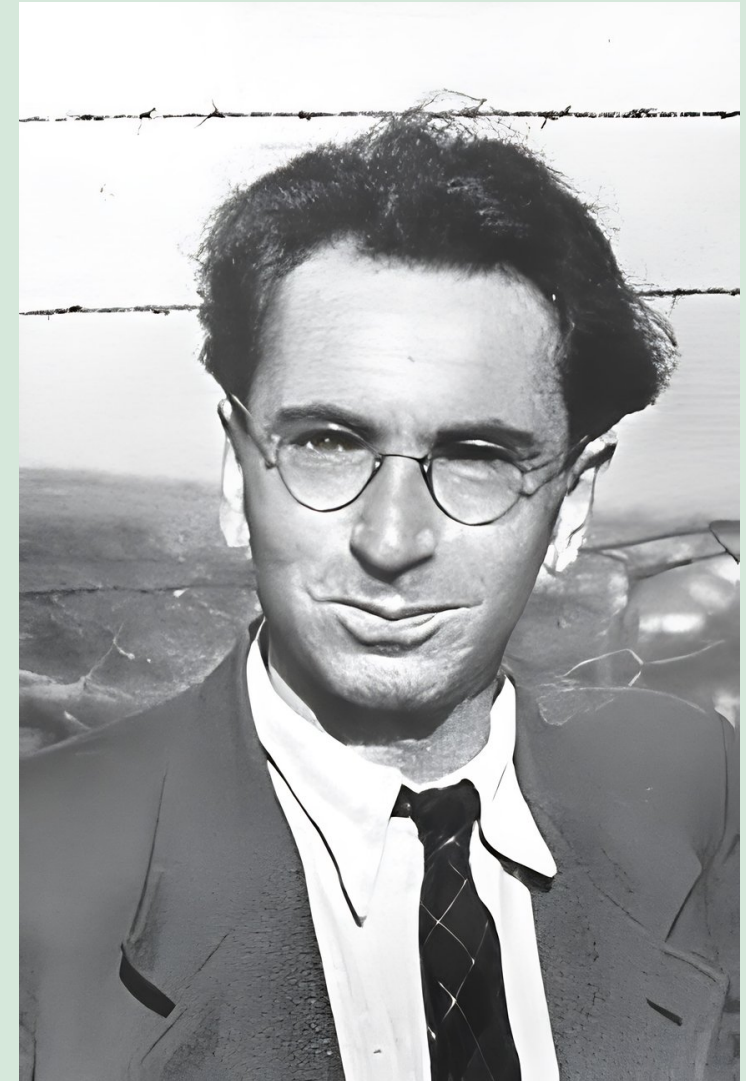
MEANING

- To find meaning is to find some purpose in all the events in one's life. It could be a job, family, a cause, and so on.
- To find significance is to know that one has contributed in some way to life – to have a healthy self-esteem.
- To find satisfaction is to know that one's contribution has blessed others and has been appreciated.



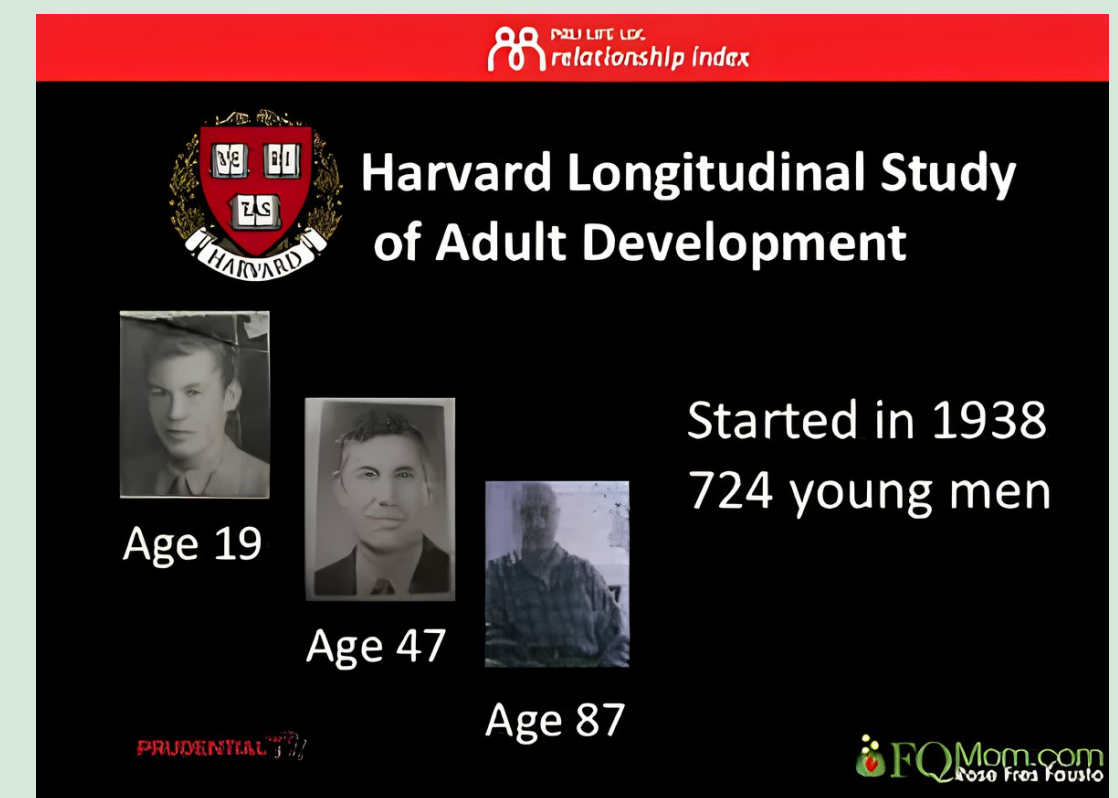
MEANING

- Some exercises to help seniors: help them to name significant events, people, memories in their lives. Going through old photos and personal collections will help seniors to join dots in their lives to trace purpose, significance, and meaning.
- “He who has a why to live can bear with any how”. “Suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning.” — Viktor E. Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning.



DEEP CONNECTIONS

- The Harvard Study of Adult Development is the longest running scientific study on happiness.
- It tracks more than 700 participants for more than 85 years.
- Researchers found that close, high-quality relationships are a much stronger predictor of lifelong happiness, health, and longevity than social class, wealth, fame, IQ, or even genes.



DEEP CONNECTIONS

- Harvard Study
- The study showed that quality is more important than quantity. What matters is the emotional warmth and safety in close ties.
- Relationship satisfaction at age 50 was a better predictor of physical health at age 80 than cholesterol levels or genetics. Good connections act as stress regulators for the body.



DEEP CONNECTIONS

- Secure attached relationships have neuroprotective effect, helping keep memories sharper for longer periods.
- For seniors, it is important to cultivate healthy relationships – in the family, in a religious community, with friends, and in the wider community.



CONCLUSION

- Aging brings many challenges. Helplessness or hopelessness. Emptiness. Loneliness.
- The three points we discussed deal with these challenges.
- Addressing them requires much empathy, active listening skills, and practical suggestions and motivation.

