

RUTGERS

Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

THE BOGGS CENTER ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service

People with I/DD Growing Old: Understanding and Supporting Age-Related Health Changes

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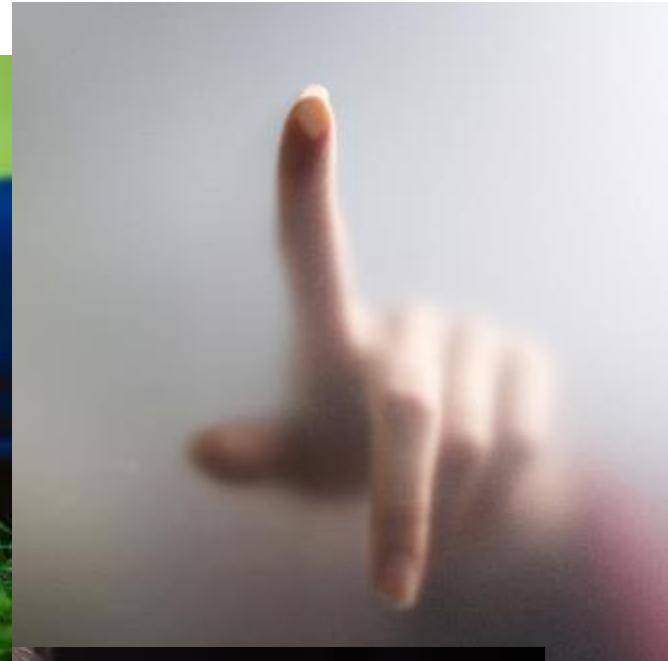
The Arc of New Jersey 12.12.18



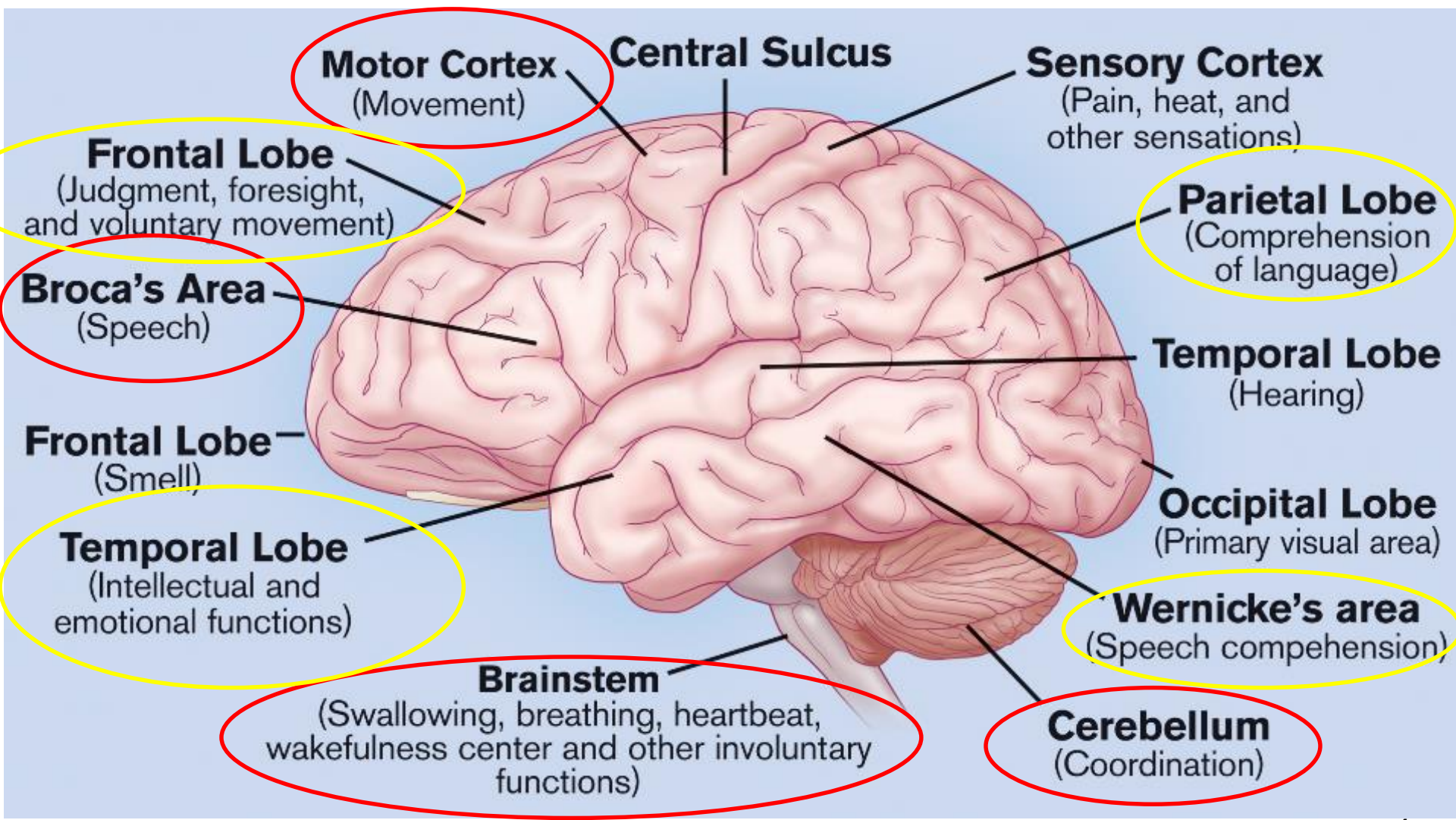
Understanding and Supporting Age-Related Health Changes



Aging Impacts Physical Senses. . .

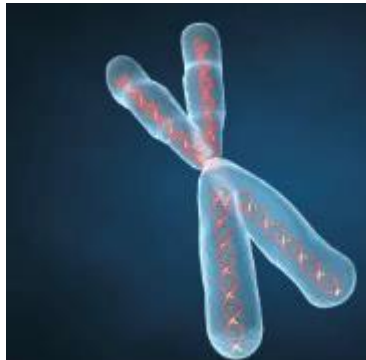


...and More



Causes of Health-Related Changes

- Aging itself
- Life-long choices
- Environment
- Relationships
- Genetics
- Health





World Health Organization

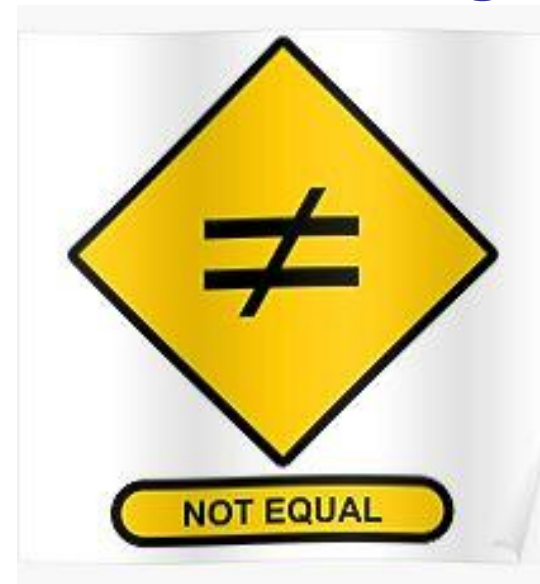
Health is a state of complete **physical**, **mental**, and **social** well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

General Health & I/DD

Having a disability does increase risk of other health conditions:

- **87%** have at least one secondary condition
- PWI/DD have an average of **4** additional conditions

Disability



Illness

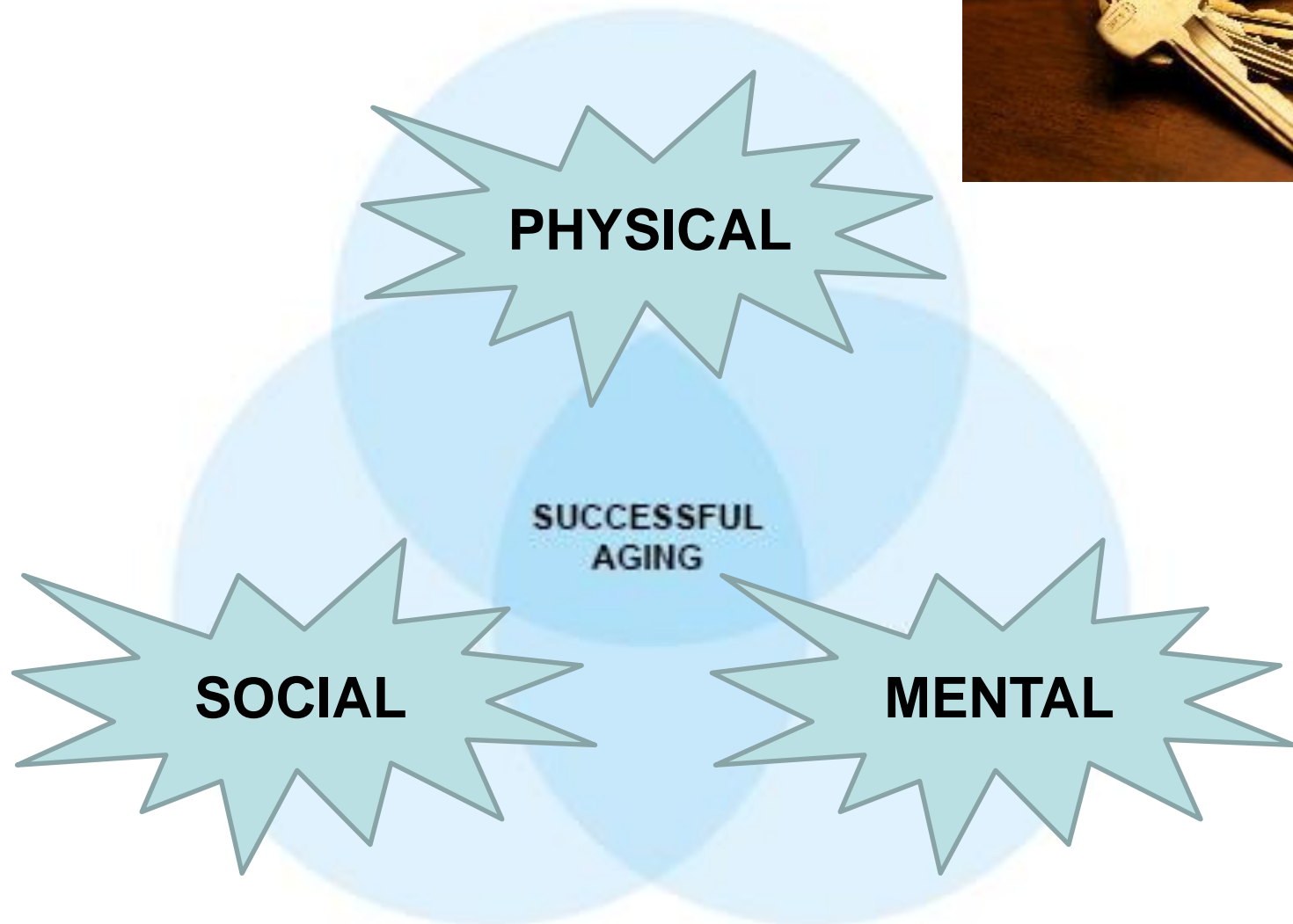
Common Secondary Conditions

- 4x respiratory issues
- 5-6x diabetes
- 5x fractures (CP)
- Chronic pain
- Sleep problems
- Extreme fatigue
- Cardiovascular disease
- Skin problems
- 70% mobility impairments
- 70% obese
- Higher rates hypertension, pressure sores, cholesterol, heart disease



- Depression
- Anxiety
- Other mental health issues
- Social isolation
- Lack of romantic relationships
- Lack of friendships
- Lack of community engagement

Successful Aging



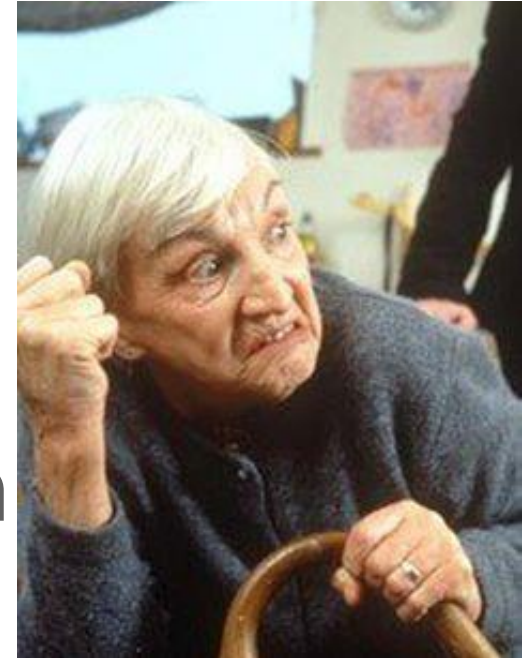
Sensory Changes and Aging

- Reduced Acuity
- Increased masking of impairments
- Reduced potential for quality of life
- Reduced potential for independence
- Increased social isolation



As a Result of Sensory Loss

- Decrease in interest
- Increase in “behaviors”
- Decrease in attention span
- Increase in falls
- Decrease in verbal communication
- Increase in misdiagnosis of dementia





How to Support Aging Vision

- Eye exams
- Adequate overhead lighting
- Lights before dark
- Nightlights
- Beware bifocals
- Eye drops
- Time to adjust inside/outside



- Curbs/open stairs
- Avoid glare
 - Curtains on windows
 - Remove shiny floors
- Use stronger, brighter contrasting and plain colors & try textures
 - Distinguish floors v. stairs
 - Stimulate interest

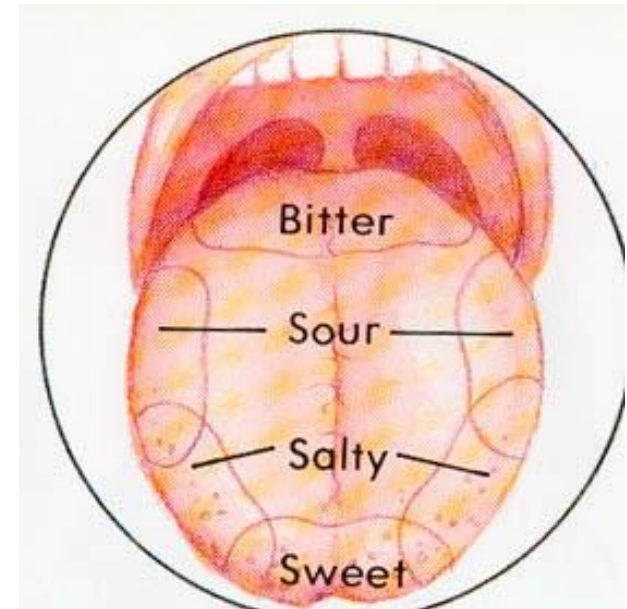
How to Support Aging Hearing

- Hearing exam
- Reduce background noise
- Lower tone
- Repeating back
- Check wax buildup
- Beware of misdiagnoses
 - Cognitive decline
 - Paranoia
- Know hearing aids may not be answer
- Practice typical deaf-etiquette
 - Gestural; visual communication strategies



How to Support Aging Taste and Smell

- Use more (non-salt) seasonings
- Recognize medication and illness can also impact sense of taste
- Make certain water intake adequate
- Monitor for body odors
- Smoke detectors
- Check for spoiled food



How to Support Aging Skin



- Use gentle soaps
- Thoroughly rinse and dry
- Encourage use of moisturizers
- Provide comfortable, rounded furniture
- Heat five degrees higher in winter
- Monitor for heat stroke in summer
- Check water temps
- Avoid use of heating pads

How to Support Aging Muscles/Bones

- Aerobic Exercise 3-4 times/week

- Walking

- Inside
- Outside

- Dancing

- Chair dancing counts
- Add props
- Use movements
- Intersperse with other activities



- Have “strength training” 2-3 times/week
 - Don’t use excessive resistance
 - Light weights more often (plastic bottles filled with sand, soup cans, inner tubes, person’s own body weight)
 - Include Weight-bearing exercises
 - Contribute to calcium intake
- Non-slip stairs, non-skid tubs, railings

Impact on Thinking

- Memory
- Attention and concentration
- Speed of processing



How to Support Impact

- Simplify the day
 - Routine, pace, break down activities, singular tasking, prioritize, harder tasks at peak times, avoid visual/auditory distractions
- Learn new methods
 - Memory aids, timers
- Active/Healthy Lifestyle
 - Exercise, learning new task, socialize, music; sleep, rest, healthy diet

Supports for PWIDD & Dementia

- **Ensure safety**
 - sensory & judgment
- **Stimulate**
 - cognitively, socially, sensorily
- **Establish and maintain routine**
 - Enhance learning and remembering
- **Communicate**
 - simple, one-step instructions with sensory cues and kind tone
- **Encourage**
 - participation, independence
- **Do not correct**
 - time, place, people
- **Anticipate**



How to Support Dementia

- Photos for ID
- Close curtains/blinds
- Lessen meal distraction
- Eating area; include
- Plate vs. table
- Finger foods
- Cup vs. Mug
- Mashed vs. Wedged
- No sensor lights
- Cover mirrors
- Skirts vs. Slacks
- Consider flooring in bathroom
- Shower curtain not door
- Bath vs. Shower
- Avoid white toilet seats
- Doors—accent or hide
- Enclosed walking area
- Sheets and beds



Validation Approach to Dementia Care



- Focus: empathy and understanding
- Accept the reality and personal truth of person
 - All behavior has meaning and communicates
 - Reduces stress, agitation, and need for medication to manage behavioral challenges
- Forcing a person with dementia to accept a reality that he or she cannot comprehend is cruel
- Emotions have more validity than the logic that leads to them

Age-associated Changes that may be misdiagnosed as Dementia

- Stroke/cardiovascular
- Seizures
- Dehydration
- Nutritional deficits
 - Vitamin B series/B-12
- Sleep deprivation
- Sensory impairments
- Adjustment reaction
- Side effects of meds
- Pneumonia
- Infections (UTI)
- Constipation
- Menopause
- 100s of other conditions and diseases

