

Program: Ageing with Grace

Speaker: Laura A. Karcher, MA, Clinical Professor and Speech-Language Clinic Director, IU Speech

and Hearing Sciences

Introduced by: Malcolm Mallette

Guests: Donna Holl, Diane Rogers, Jackie Abbett, Petra Ritchie, Sue Hale

Attendance: 127

Scribe: Don Mink

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The presentation and handout considered: 1. What is normal aging? 2. What happens when normal aging is interrupted? 3. How do you age with grace?

Key concepts in healthy aging are: 1. General Intelligence (Crystallized – General “Knowledge”, and Fluid – Solve “Novel” Problems), and, 2. Cognitive Reserve (Active – “Changeable” and Passive – “Genetics”). Aging brings sensory changes which affect cognition including processing speed, attention (foundation for cognition), memory, executive function, and, communication.

Everyone experiences slight cognitive changes during aging. Interruptions in normal aging include: medical illness (stroke, brain injury and dementia), psychological factors and sensory changes (e.g. hearing and vision). Cognition and communication are often affected by a stroke, although, 80% of strokes are preventable. Brain injury can cause an alteration in brain function. Dementia is not inevitable and some causes are reversible.

The Key Concepts (General Intelligence, Cognitive Reserve) can be influenced to enable graceful aging by actively managing health conditions to modify risk factors through proper nutrition, physical activity, staying connected with others and keeping an active mind through meaningful activity and formal cognitive training.

A review of commercial brain training was provided with the “strongest” (Level 1) being Posit Science/Brain HQ and the “weakest” (Level 3) being Dakim and Lumosity. Specialized brain training exercises appear to offer more benefit than simple mental activities, and tasks that are adaptive, novel and personally engaging are best.

Communication is more than talking and can be maximized through hearing and vision. Memory strategies (e.g. “think of the word”) were provided including: managing time (don’t do too many things at once), be well organized (keep a routine), use external memory aids (mobile phones, notepads) and use of association memory techniques (visualization). Attention strategies include: paraphrase in your own words the information heard, write notes and summary statements from reading material, relate new information to personal experiences and silently tell yourself “pay attention”.

Normal aging is...NORMAL! Interruptions in normal aging can be managed. Graceful aging is possible.



Laura Karcher