

# LEARNING GUIDE

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## AGING SUCCESSFULLY:

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF GROWING OLD

*With*

**PAUL BALTES, Ph.D. and MARGRET BALTES, Ph.D.**

(31 Minutes)



**DAVIDSON** *films*

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# **A G I N G   S U C C E S S F U L L Y :**

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF GROWING OLD**

**With Paul Baltes, Ph.D. and Margret Baltes, Ph.D.**

**Narrated by Monisha Pasupathi, Ph.D.**

[ 31 minutes ]

The production was filmed in several locations including a subsidized senior housing complex in Palo Alto, California, a Farmers' Market in San Luis Obispo, California, the Palm Springs Follies (a live showcase of older dancers and singers) and various locations in Washington DC and Cape Cod.

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### **Introduction**

- Percentage-wise, the population demographics are changing. In 1990 people over 65 made up 12% of the population. By 2020, they will make up 20% of the population. In 1900 the average life span was 45 years, now it is closer to 80 years.

### **The Inverted U Model of Life Development**

- The "inverted u" model works for physical strength and some types of intellectual activity. There is a sharp increase of abilities in youth, then a leveling off and a decline in old age.
- Personality development does not follow the u shaped curve. Personality is remarkably stable after young adulthood.

### **Two Kinds of Mental Activity:**

#### **Fluid Mechanics**

- Involve the speed and accuracy of elementary aspects of sensory-cognitive processing such as reacting to symbols on a screen are biologically based follow the inverted u model

## Crystallized Pragmatics

- Are learned complex behaviors like literacy, professional skills and social coping mechanisms. Are culturally based and do not follow the inverted U model as growth continues in healthy old age

## Wisdom

- **Definition:** An expert knowledge system of the fundamental pragmatics of life, permitting exceptional insight, judgment and advice involving complex and uncertain matters of the human condition. In wisdom the best of mind and character come together.
- The Baltes developed a structured interview to assess wisdom in older people and found that although age does not assure higher levels of wisdom, a higher percentage of people over 50 are wise than younger adults.

## The SOC Model

Can be used to look at development across the entire life span

### SELECTION

- People select among options available to them such things as how to make a living, where to live, with whom to associate.

### OPTIMIZATION

- People optimize their lives by seeking out opportunities to maximize their preferences by seeking out the best options to meet their personal goals

### COMPENSATION

- People compensate for weaknesses or lacks by finding other ways to do the things that are important to them. They use external aids like glasses or internal ones like taking on fewer duties when they are feeling tired.

## **Use of Dependency**

- Can be overused as when nursing home staff "reward" passive patients.
- Can be positively used by elders to conserve energy for life enhancing activities.

## **Adaptive Competence**

- The ability to draw on an extensive knowledge system about one's functioning in the world and a flexible ability to problem solve, thus effectively managing the opportunities and challenges of life.

## **Signs of Successful Aging**

- Ability to deal well with uncertainty
- Strong social support system
- Healthful life styles

## **People featured in this film:**

**Betty Friedan** was the well-known feminist author and is shown at home.

**Bud Mercer** is a professional tap dancer and is shown in performance at the Palm Springs Follies and at home discussing his life.

**Annie Mickles** is a retired daycare center cook and is now working as a volunteer at a hospital where she is seen in this video.

**Joe Murray** is a retired halfway house counselor and is interviewed in front of the Lincoln Memorial by the taxicab he now drives.

**Joan Erikson** was a writer and a dancer and is shown in various Cape Cod locations. She was the wife of the psychologist Erik Erikson.

## RELATED FILMS

*also available from Davidson Films*

***ERIK H. ERIKSON: A LIFE'S WORK*** (1991) 38 minutes

***ON OLD AGE 1: A CONVERSATION WITH JOAN ERIKSON AT 90*** (1995) 39 minutes

***ON OLD AGE 2: A CONVERSATION WITH JOAN ERIKSON AT 92*** (1995) 30 minutes

***OLDER BRAINS, NEW CONNECTIONS: A CONVERSATION WITH MARIAN DIAMOND AT 73*** (2000) 30 minutes

***THESE VITAL YEARS: A CONVERSATION WITH BETTY FRIEDAN AT 76*** (2000) 24 minutes