

## Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

**Programme: Bachelor of Arts**

**Subject: Psychology**

**Course Code: PSC 107**

**Course Title: Positive Psychology**

**Unit: IV - Applications of Positive Psychology**

**Module Name: Ageing: Factors that Promote Successful Ageing, Socio-Emotional Selectivity Theory of Successful Ageing.**

**Module No: 28**

**Name of the Presenter: Ms. Sweta Shyam Matonkar**

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### Notes

#### **AGEING: FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL AGEING, SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SELECTIVITY THEORY OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING**

##### ***Sources of Resilience in Adulthood and Later Life***

Many of the factors that contribute to resilient responses in childhood also contribute to adult resilience. Carol Ryff and her colleagues have provided one of the more extensive and empirically-supported models of well-being. The six dimensions presented below describe psychological well-being. Although not originally focused on resilience, research has shown that these factors are predictive of resilient responses in the face of adversity, and in successful aging and the maintenance of good mental health. In short, the six dimensions describe aspects of an individual's personality, self-concept, competence, and social relationships that represent resources for effective living. The six dimensions are described below: -

***Self-Acceptance:*** - Self-acceptance defines a person who has a positive attitude toward himself or herself and accepts all the varied aspects of self, including both strengths and weaknesses. Such a person feels positive about his or her life so far. Self-acceptance means you embrace and like who you are.

**Personal Growth:** - Personal growth refers to a person's feelings of continued development and effectiveness, and an openness to new experiences and challenges. Personal growth is exhibited by a person who is still excited about life and learning new things.

**Purpose in Life:** - Purpose in life means that you have goals and beliefs that give direction to your life. Your life has meaning and purpose, perhaps because of satisfying work, religious beliefs, or devotion to a cause or to the needs of others. To have purpose means that you feel you are making a positive difference in the world and that your life is personally meaningful.

**Environmental Mastery:** - Mastery refers to a feeling of competence and the ability to manage the complex environment of today's fast-paced life. Mastery is reflected in a person's ability to create a personally suitable living situation, including successful management of work, finances, family, housing, health, and all the conditions necessary for a successful life.

**Autonomy:** - Autonomous people are comfortable with self-direction, taking initiative, and working independently. Such people possess internal standards that guide their actions and allow them to resist negative social pressures from others. Being your own person and following your own values and interests would express a sense of autonomy.

**Positive Relations with Others:** - People who have positive relations have warm, satisfying, and trusting interactions with others and are capable of empathy and intimacy. Positive relations refer to the quality, rather than the quantity of our relationships. Having good friends, a satisfying marriage, and supportive relations with co-workers all express this dimension.

## **Successful Aging**

Recent studies focusing on the process of aging support the operation of basic adaptive and protective systems that provide strength and resilience as people enter the final stages of life. We noted earlier that older people are, on average, as happy as people in other periods of adulthood.

Large-scale epidemiological studies show low rates of nearly all psychological disorders among older adults, with the exception of dementia. However, at some point, most elderly persons do suffer the loss of loved ones and reductions in their own cognitive and physical abilities. These changes raise the issue of personal mortality. How do elderly people maintain their emotional stability and

continue to enjoy life when they are faced with the challenges of aging? One recent theory called socio-emotional selectivity theory helps explain how age-related changes can be the basis for a more satisfying, pleasurable, and hassle-free life, and for stronger social support.

Carstensen argues that people's perception of how much time they have left in life exerts a powerful influence over the goals they choose to pursue. Young people have an expansive perception of time because most of their lives lie ahead of them. Aged individuals tend to perceive time as limited because most of their lives lie behind them. Time may be viewed, quite literally, as running out. Perception of personal time available as either expansive or limited has a determining effect on the goals people choose to pursue. Goals, in turn, have a determining effect on behavior and the dominant activities in a person's life. Goals energize and direct behavior toward their realization. For example, a college student is typically focused on activities related to the goals of getting a college degree, exploring careers, and establishing relationships in preparation for the future.

According to socioemotional selectivity theory, as people realize they have fewer years remaining in their lives, they begin to shift their energy and attention away from activities and goals related to the future and come to focus more on the present. This transition involves a shift in emphasis, from knowledge-related social goals that prepare a person for the future, to emotion-related social goals that maintain and enhance one's present life situation. When we are young and our futures stretch out in front of us, we are naturally oriented toward exploring new experiences, meeting new people, and gaining knowledge and skills that may help us in the future. When we are older and time is limited, we are less likely to change or give up our enjoyable activities, everyday routines, or significant relationships for the possibility of future gains. We are more focused on emotional satisfaction in the present. This may seem like a recipe for stagnation, but research suggests quite the contrary.

Numerous studies by Carstensen and her colleagues support the potential for such a refocusing of goals by elderly individuals to produce heightened life satisfaction and peace of mind. Being relieved of the burden of preparing for the future, and recognizing the fragility of life and its approaching end seems to bring out the best in people. For example, compared to middle-aged couples, older couples showed better regulation of emotions while dealing with conflicts involving such issues as finances, children, and in-laws. In other words,

discussions of these issues by older couples were characterized by less severe conflict, lower levels of anger, belligerence, and complaining, and more expressions of affection than similar discussions by middle-aged couples. Older couples also expressed more pleasure in their marriages and in activities such as talking about their children and grandchildren, and doing things together (e.g., vacations). Long-term married couples have also been shown to grow closer in their later years. They become more concerned with enjoying each other's company and less concerned with trying to change, impress, or dominate their partners.

Carstensen argues that these changes occur because a time-limited perspective shifts attention toward the value of a smaller but higher-quality social network in which one is most likely to be validated and loved. Elderly people often choose to refine their social relationships in order to maximize the quality and satisfaction of their most important social partners. Research supports these predictions. Older people devote less time and energy to casual acquaintances and meeting new people, and more long-standing relationships with their spouses, best friends, children, and grandchildren. The frequency of interactions with acquaintances was found to decline with age, while interactions with spouses and immediate family members remained constant or increased in frequency. People in their later years seem to develop an "inner circle" of close relationships that are optimally equipped to fulfill supportive and emotional needs. The age-related changes described by the socio-emotional selectivity theory can be seen as adaptive responses that create resources for resilience as one faces the inevitable challenges of aging.

## References

1. Baumgardner, S.R. Crothers M.K. (2015). *Positive psychology*. Indian sub-continent adaptation, Dorling Kindersley (India) Private Limited, Pearson Education.