Aging Relationships

Test Section 4
Miserable Years versus Golden Years

Dr. Seuss in the GOLDEN YEARS

I cannot see--I cannot pee
I cannot chew--I cannot screw
My memory shrinks--My hearing stinks
No sense of smell--I look like hell
My body's drooping--Have trouble pooping

The Golden Years have come at last
The Golden Years can kiss my ass.
Erikson: Ego Integrity vs Despair; 50 and older

- Looking back at my life and taking stock
- Relationships are key in this journey
- Facing the fact of loneliness in aging years
- Being a part of community
- Remaining active and giving back

Erikson, 1986
Fact of the Day

Americans are growing older. In 1970 the number of those older than 75 years of age was 7.5 million. In 2010 the number of those older than 75 years of age was 16.6 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010).
Marital Quality

- Some it increases throughout the later years
- Some it steadily declines over the years.
- Some it remains stable throughout middle years and later years.

Happy Marriages characterized by
  - Mutual family vision
  - Spouse if #1 priority
  - Respect, politeness, and kindness
  - Manage intimacy/distance
  - Religiosity

(Kaslow and Hammerschimdt, 1992)
Marital Quality (cont.)

• Unhappy Marriages characterized by
  – Divorce not an option
  – Highly religious
  – Women's needs for financial security
  – Maintenance of emotional/physical distance

(Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 1992)
Overall Rating

- Four-fifths of all newly wed and older women evaluated their spouses positively.

- Two-fifths of middle aged women did not.

- Marriage in old age is best characterized by a feeling of peacefulness and a lack of stress.

- Emphasis is placed on loyalty and emotional security.

  - Those facing retirement voice renewed interest in their spouse’s personality.

(Rhyne, 1981 and Medley, 1977)
Marital Tasks for Aging Adults
(Rubinowitz, 1999)
Marital Tasks (cont.)

• Letting Go
Changes in Marriage

• Marriage Types
  – Marriages characterized by equality tend to be happier than those of traditional sex role distinctions.
    • Retirement of spouse in traditional marriages often creates new role strains.
    • Husbands often get involved with household tasks

• Change in communication patterns and expression
  – More control over emotions
  – Less emotional negativity, more affectionate
  – Sources of late life conflict are: communication, recreation, money, children, and sex
  – Less potential for conflict and greater potential for pleasure
  – Same complaints in later life about spouse as there was in mid-life

(Medley, 1981)
Sexual Relationship

An old gentleman was walking through the woods one day when he heard a soft woman's voice from a log nearby say "Hello." As he turned, looking for the woman, he spotted a frog. Again the soft womanly voice speaks to him saying "Hello." The old man looks at the frog as she tells him, "Kiss me and I will become a beautiful young maiden and will give you a wonderful night of pleasure." With this the old man picks up the frog and puts it in his pocket and continues on down the path. The frog hollers from inside his pocket, "Did you hear me? Kiss me and I will become a beautiful young maiden and will give you a wonderful night of pleasure." The old man takes the frog from his pocket and replies, "Ya know, at my age I'd rather have a talking frog."
Sexual Relationship (cont.)
Sexual Relationship (cont.)

(Verwoerdt, 1976)
Sex After Sixty

• Changes in Women

(Ludeman, 1981)
Sex After Sixty (cont.)

• Changes in Men

(Ludeman, 1981)
Fact of the Day
New Roles

• Most older people live less than an hour from at least one child.
  – Most prefer living separately from children.
  – Independence is valued.
• The most frequent family types are married couples and widowed living alone. (two thirds of all residents)
• Celebration and readjustment to retirement
• Health Issues

(Winter, 1975)
New Roles

- Financial Issues
- Adult children and grandchildren
- Social Recreational Activities
- Dependence/independence/autonomy
- Loss of relationships

(Winter, 1975)
Losing a spouse

- **Crisis's stage of grief**—
  - For several weeks the person experiences a chaotic state of shock.

- **Transition stage**
  - Beginning to create a new life

- **New life stage**
  - Changes lifestyle to incorporate life as a single person

(Kavanaugh, 2009)