



MARYLAND COALITION ON MENTAL HEALTH & AGING
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CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH AGING: A Fact Sheet to Share

These days, people can expect to live longer, healthier and more independent lives than in past generations. We are constantly learning strategies to promote “successful aging” and maintaining mental health is a critical piece of this goal. Without good mental health, physical illnesses are worsened, relationships are at risk and quality of life is greatly diminished.

There are multiple physical, social, emotional, spiritual, mental and activity considerations that play into the mental well being of an older adult. The more people know about these issues and their relevance to mental health, the better they can understand their own needs.

Changes are certain in later life. Changes require individuals to make choices. People may choose to accept, adapt or otherwise take action to positively deal with change.

Stress is a natural response to change. Common categories of changes and challenges associated with aging include:

- Managing time
- Managing health
- Responding to pain or disability
- Negotiating new systems
- Relationship resolutions / development
- Social adjustments
- Self regard and esteem
- Bereavement, grief and loss
- Professional identity
- Functional ability
- Financial resources
- Physical attributes
- Cultural status
- Home environment

As you can see, these categories represent significant aspects of life. Changes that are unexpected, unwanted or otherwise challenging may cause too much stress and have negative consequences – no matter how hard we try to stay positive. It is a good idea to monitor stress levels and to take action to get help when changes and challenges feel overwhelming or too difficult. Getting support for life changes is a positive step to maintain good mental health. Support groups may be found through the local Area Agency on Aging.

Further information on mental health can be found on the website www.mdaging.org or contact Kim Burton at 410-235-1178 x 210.