Optimal Aging: The Main Idea

By definition, Optimal Aging is the capacity to function across many domains such as physical, functional, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual to one's satisfaction and despite one's medical conditions (What Is Optimal Aging?). A person that I believe to be aging optimally is my mother (I mean this in the nicest way). My mom is 52 years old and still acts and looks as though she is in her late 30s. This woman goes to the gym four times a week for two hours. In warmer weather, she plays golf at least three times a week and has been for the past three years. She is currently the president of the company Anderson Partners — and has been for about two years now — and says she will likely continue in this position for more than 10 years. She knows how to balance work along with relaxation and family.

She goes out with friends at least once a week, more than I do, and stays in contact with her friends from many years ago. She is in great health and her mental and physical functions are outstanding. She goes out and exercises more than I, a 20-year-old, do. The only thing I would say is not in her favor is her anxiety and depression, genetically passed down from her mother — my grandmother — and has been passed down to my generation — she does take medication for it though. I believe the theory that best fits her is continuity theory because she is "integrating those changes into a coherent, consistent life path" and "chooses familiar skills and engage in familiar activities" (Berk). She engages with new people and keeps connections strong throughout her aging process. She even joined a woman's golf league that plays every Wednesday and met new friends through that.

An adult that I believe is not aging as optimally is my grandpa, my biological dad's father. My grandpa is reaching the age of mid-to-late 70s which is about 20 years older than my mother, but my grandma is roughly the same age and is doing better than he is. My grandpa recently had a stroke. He has to take multiple medicines to help him remain stable. His memory is impaired and his hearing is almost gone. He does work at Sol's Jewelry and Loan, but other than that does not leave the house. He spends the majority of his time in his living room watching TV, sleeping or working on puzzles like 2048.*

I don't believe he is aging as successfully because he used to smoke a lot and drank more than the average person does. Since he does not leave his house a lot, he doesn't socialize with other people as much, and since his memory is limited, he forgets certain things like taking his medicine, birthdays or where he places things — which is very frustrating for him. I believe that socioemotional selectivity is the social theory of aging that best fits him because his aging changed some routines for him, and his contact with family and friends is slowly declining. He does not reach out as much as he used to and his "information-gathering function" has become less significant (Berk).

* 2048 is a challenging number puzzle for kids and grown-ups. The object is to join the numbers to get the 2048 tile

Works Cited:

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2. “What Is Optimal Aging?” Bowling Green State University, https://www.bgsu.edu/health-and-human-services/optimal-aging-institute/what-is- optimal-aging.html.