Social Isolation in the Older Adult

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Learning Objectives:

- . . . recognize how hearing loss may be part of a broader array of body changes in the older adult, leading the patient to make adjustments in behavior in order to compensate
- . . . identify the life, familial and vocational effects that may put the older adult at risk for isolation, all further complicated by the presence of hearing loss
- . . . list intervention techniques designed to emphasize the value of maintaining good social contact despite the presence of hearing loss
How do we view the older adult?
How does the older adult view aging?

Aging: constant reminder of mortality

- Fear of failure
- Fear of irrelevance
- Fear of loss of independence
- Fear of suffering
Where does hearing loss fall in the progression of aging?
Denial

Normalization & Passive Acceptance

“This is just what happens when you get older...”
Suspicion

Confidence & Self-efficacy
SOC Model of Reaction to Aging

- Selectivity
- Optimization
- Compensation

Most common

Least common
Health Risk of Isolation: Loneliness
Six areas of loss contribute to loneliness in older adults

- Individual initiators
- Family and friends
- Professional identity
- Purpose in life
- Value to society
- Societal initiators

Palmarini et al., 2017

The Downward Spiral
“Successful Aging”

1: Free from disease

2: Maintaining good cognitive function

3: Maintaining quality contacts with people and activities
Aging & Relationships

Number of Relationships

Age

Livingston et al., 2017
Aging & Relationships

Health Risk of Isolation

Not related to *number* of relationships

Is related to *depth* of relationships
Relationships: Friends versus Families

What makes a patient ready?

- Trust
- Professional
- Product
- Self
- Emotionally feels the effects of the hearing loss
- Takes ownership
- Realistic expectations
Creating Change

Suggestions on Counseling Strategy:

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