

Ageing Well, and Eating Well: The Role of Food and Mealtime Behaviours in Supporting Older Adults' Wellbeing.

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How *else* can food and mealtime behaviours support older adults' wellbeing?

Presentation Overview

- **Research Project 1:** What it means to 'age well' in a residential care home.
- **Research Project 2:** Enabling older people to eat with others.

What *changes* can we make in order to promote wellbeing through food and mealtime behaviours?

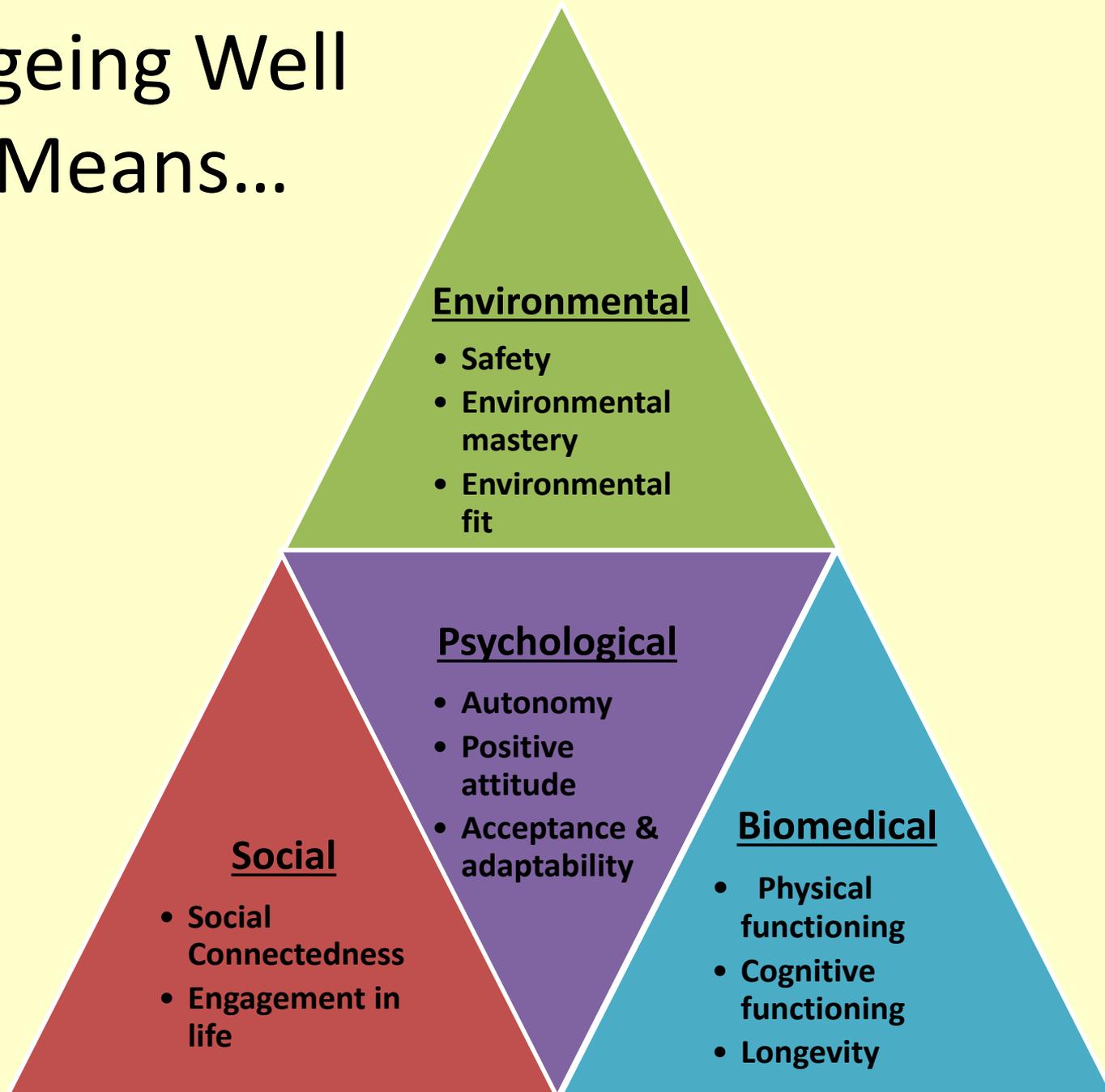
Project 1: What it means to 'age well' in a residential care home.

- Those with experience of ageing (in a particular context) are best-placed to tell us what 'ageing well' means.
- Interviewed 19 care home residents (from 6 care homes) about what 'ageing well' means to them.

Management	1 Not for Profit : 5 Privately Owned
Care Provision	1 Residential : 5 Care Home with Nursing
CQC Ratings	5 'Good' : 1 'Requires Improvement'

Age	71 – 94 (average = 86 yrs)
Gender	3 Males : 16 Females
Time in Care Homes	2 months – 19 years (average = 2.7 yrs)

Ageing Well Means...



Having Social Connections

Opportunities to laugh

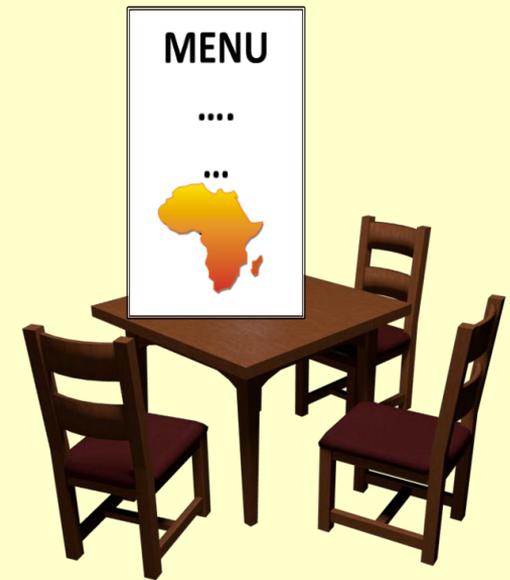
Feeling valued and respected

Others taking an interest in you

Reciprocal relationships

Being able to share things

“You get very, uh, introverted ... if you don't do that because you're just in your room and you've got the television for company . So you need that interaction with other people.”



Social interaction should be recognised as *an aim* of mealtimes. How can we best support this?

Having Social Connections

“What gets you most, I think, is looking around and seeing ...old people.. all day!”

“I think you ... adjust to the people that you're with... If you're with younger people, you are brighter, and you're much more cheerful.”

“[I said] ‘it's awful good of you' [to see me]. And he says, ‘oh, ...it's great! ... I can come here on a Sunday, sit down here and drink tea and eat chocolate biscuits'... So I do think it was a two-way thing.”



How could mealtimes be used to support positive interactions with people from *outside the home*?

Having Autonomy

“When you're at home, you do as you like and it doesn't matter. But you can't do that in (here).”

“Now, when I go down to, breakfast... I tend to help myself. It's difficult ... but I help myself. And I like to do that, because ... I feel I've got a little bit more independence, and I haven't given in to old age”

“I want a teapot filling. Don't pour it out for me”



Food choice and mealtimes present *opportunities for maintaining autonomy*. How can we support these?

Having Meaningful Engagement

“Ageing well means to continue to live a life... Not just to, sit back and say, ‘Oh well, I’m an old person: let it all happen’.”

“I'm on the committee and.. you are allowed to make suggestions... You see, we've got a voice.”

“I said, ‘how are you feeling John?’ And he says, ‘not very well’. I says, ‘oh well you’ll be better this afternoon, especially when you’ve had your dinner’ and that. So I talk.. what is it, positive ... I'm nearly like a carer in a way.”

What food/mealtime-related roles could residents do?

Project 2: Enabling Older People to Eat with Others

- Eating ***with others*** has a range of health and wellbeing benefits:
 - Improved diet and nutritional status
 - Reduced levels of depression
 - Reduced feelings of loneliness
- What are the barriers and facilitators to attending e.g. community lunch clubs?

How can we apply these findings to support older adults in other contexts to eat with others?

What We Did

Interviews/focus groups with 3 types of people

Older adults
who **do**
socially eat

(20 Women: 12 Men
Aged 60 – 89 years)

Older adults
who do **not**
socially eat

People who
work with
older adults

2 Women: 2 Men
all staff/vols

- Questions about social eating experiences
- Posters advertising lunch clubs
- Vignettes of other older adults

Give Personal Invitations

“Sometimes if people ... see a poster and it says ‘All Welcome’, I think, if people don’t get out much, they truly don’t think that that includes them”



“I think somebody knocking on my door and saying come down on Thursday, like she [volunteer] did. She said: ‘are you coming down on Thursday?’ So I did”

How could we help people to feel more *personally welcome* to eat with others?

Target Positive Social Identities

“I think they look a bit, erm, old.”

“It sounds like something that is for old people. I find now as I am getting old, society has put me into another category.”

“Even if you are [lonely], do you want to be around lots of other lonely people?”



**Pudding-Lovers'
Lunch Club!**

How could we make social eating opportunities more appealing by targeting *positive social identities*?

Combine Activities with Eating

How can we get more men to attend lunch clubs?

“Tell them there’s a football match!”

“And before the film starts you’ve got half an hour with the food in front of you and you just talk to people”

“You find that if there’s a meeting and you say, ‘we’re putting a buffet on’, you get more there”

What *activities* could be combined with a meal or snack to promote engagement and social eating?

Be Aware of Issues around Functional Difficulties with Eating

“I’m all for social eating but there is a time in your life where ... I’m not ready to wear a bib, you know, a Tommie Tippee to catch the bits.”

“I know someone with Parkinson's and there was literally peas flying all over the table. And I’ve got a blind cousin who can’t see what he’s eating so he is certainly very conscious”

“And bits of food coming out of their mouths. Oh it’s horrible.”

How can we give people the confidence to eat with others despite the *impact of health conditions*?

Summary and Conclusions

- Food and meal times provide opportunities to enable older adults to age well.
 - Small changes to the environment, norms, or routines of a home could have a big impact on residents' wellbeing.
- Older adults report numerous barriers and facilities for eating with others.
 - Knowing about these issues can help us support social eating in various settings.

What changes will **you** make?

Collaborators

Successful ageing in care homes work

- Sara Elias and Holly Toner (University of Manchester)
- Christina Bryant (University of Melbourne)

Social eating work

- Zinnia Mitchell-Smith and Jenny Fisher (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- Anisa Saeed (University of Manchester)

“I’ve been in three types of care homes ... This is the best. This has amazing food. That helps you, with everything... A guy with a full belly, he doesn’t need much more. All he needs is [pats his stomach].”

Do get in touch with comments, ideas, or suggestions, or if you want to be involved in our future work

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