



# Ageing Well

## Positive Ageing Toolkit



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AGEING WELL

Ageing Well: Science based habits of people who age well

Project No. : 2023-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000153350

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Positive Ageing Toolkit, a comprehensive and empowering resource designed to equip adults over 65 and their caregivers with essential skills and knowledge to enhance well-being and resilience in later life. This toolkit is a part of the “Ageing well” project that overall aims to improve the well-being of older adults from 65 and above. The objectives of this project include enhancing the skills and competencies of older adults to boost their well-being and active participation in their communities, equipping adult educators and caregivers with the necessary tools to better support elderly well-being and active ageing.

As part of this initiative, the Positive Ageing toolkit has been developed from extensive research in France, Cyprus, Greece, Belgium, Spain and Czech Republic that includes: 1) desk research and 2) field research, focus groups with elderly and questionnaire with caregivers.

### Desk research – key findings:

- Countries have been developing policies that address the needs of older adults integrating social services and financial support systems.
- Improvements in healthcare systems include better access to mental health services and training for healthcare providers in the needs of elderly
- Financial security is essential, where efforts have been made including the pension reforms, subsidies for healthcare and housing.
- Community centers, social clubs and support groups provide spaces to connect with others and participate in social activities and promote lifelong learning

### Focus groups with older adults – key findings:

- Seniors do engage in a variety of daily activities such as physical exercise, household chores, socializing and cultural pursuits.
- Perceptions of ageing vary – many seniors express a positive outlook on life with happiness, health and independence as important factors
- The level of optimism often correlates with the availability and quality of support systems, health status and societal attitudes towards ageing
- Challenges are similar across different cultures: health issues, mobility limitations, adapting to technological advancements, emotional distress, loss of loved ones and financial concerns.



Several recommendations emerge from the field research of this project. One of the common needs of is improving technological literacy as digital skills are increasingly necessary for accessing information and services. Furthermore, enhancing community and family support structures and providing better healthcare access. One of the main recommendations is that policymakers should develop age-friendly infrastructures and implement policies that reduce social isolation and financial insecurity among seniors.

#### Questionnaire with caregivers - key findings:

- Caregivers struggle to balance duties with personal and professional responsibilities leading to emotional stress
- Lack of sufficient financial assistant and formal recognition of caregiving efforts
- ➔ Expand respite care services and improve awareness and access to digital tools that can aid caregiving skills
- ➔ Implement support systems, peer support groups and community partnerships to reduce isolation

The Positive Ageing toolkit addresses the unique challenges and opportunities associated with ageing, offering valuable resources to help older adults navigate the ageing process more effectively. By promoting a positive and active approach to ageing, we aim to foster a more fulfilling and resilient experience for all involved.

This toolkit is divided into five key modules, each focusing on a critical aspect of well-being and resilience:

1. **Introduction to Well-being and Resilience:** This module introduces the core concepts of well-being and resilience, explaining their importance in the context of ageing. It covers the physical, emotional, social, and psychological dimensions of well-being, providing self-reflection activities for well-being and resilience.

2. **Positive and Active Ageing, well-being and resilience:** This module explores the benefits of staying physically, mentally, and socially active. It provides strategies for maintaining an active lifestyle, including tips on physical exercise, cognitive activities, and social engagement, all crucial for promoting a vibrant and healthy life in older age.
3. **Examples and case studies through Positive Psychology practices:** Highlighting real-life stories, this module showcases how individuals have experienced positive transformations through the application of Positive Psychology practices. It offers practices and strategies that contributed to these successes, in addition to tips for caregivers.
4. **Best practices from other countries who have good social welfare systems:** This module examines exemplary social welfare systems from around the world, providing a comparative analysis of different approaches to supporting the elderly. It offers lessons and best practices that can be adapted to various contexts, helping to enhance local social welfare strategies.
5. **Practical tips for well-being and resilience in the elderly and caregivers:** The final module offers simple, actionable tips for enhancing well-being and resilience for both older adults and their caregivers. It includes advice on physical, mental, and emotional health, stress management, and self-care practices, ensuring a holistic approach to ageing well.

Caregivers and adult educators will also find valuable resources to improve their well-being and resilience, helping them build stronger, more positive relationships with the elderly they support. The toolkit's open-source nature ensures broad accessibility, aiming to benefit a wide audience and make a cost-effective impact on local communities. We invite you to explore the contents and discover the many ways this toolkit can contribute to a more fulfilling and resilient experience of ageing.

## Module 1: Introduction to well-being and resilience

### Introduction

As the global population ages, understanding how to age well has become increasingly important. This module explores the concepts of well-being and resilience in the context of ageing. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how individuals can maintain their well-being and adapt to the challenges of ageing.



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### Objectives:

- Examine the factors that contribute to a fulfilling, healthy, and resilient later life.
- Promote well-being: Learn strategies to enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being in older adults.
- Build resilience: Identify and develop resilience factors that help individuals cope with the challenges associated with ageing.
- Practice well-being and resilience: Share the tools necessary to support positive ageing experiences and foster resilience among older populations.



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## Section 1: Definitions of well-being and resilience

Health is currently identified with the concept of well-being, as it is defined to be a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or disability. In a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, an individual can fulfil his/her potential and personal resources, can cope with the usual stressors of life, she/he is productive and creative, and contributes to the wider community (WHO, 2013).

### Well-being

Well-being is a positive condition experienced by individuals and societies. Like health, it is a key component of everyday life, and it is defined by social, economic and environmental conditions. The well-being of a society can be observed by the extent to which it is resilient, develops capacity to act and is prepared to overcome challenges (WHO, 2021). At the individual level, the term refers to the pursuit of unfolding one's potential (Galiana et al., 2020). According to Keyes' model, well-being is defined as the combination of a) **positive feelings about life** (emotional well-being) and b) **good functioning in life** (psychological and social functioning). Three levels of well-being are distinguished: a. **languishing**, b. **moderate well-being**, and c. **flourishing**. High levels of well-being correspond to the commonly accepted term of 'flourishing' (Keyes, 2002).



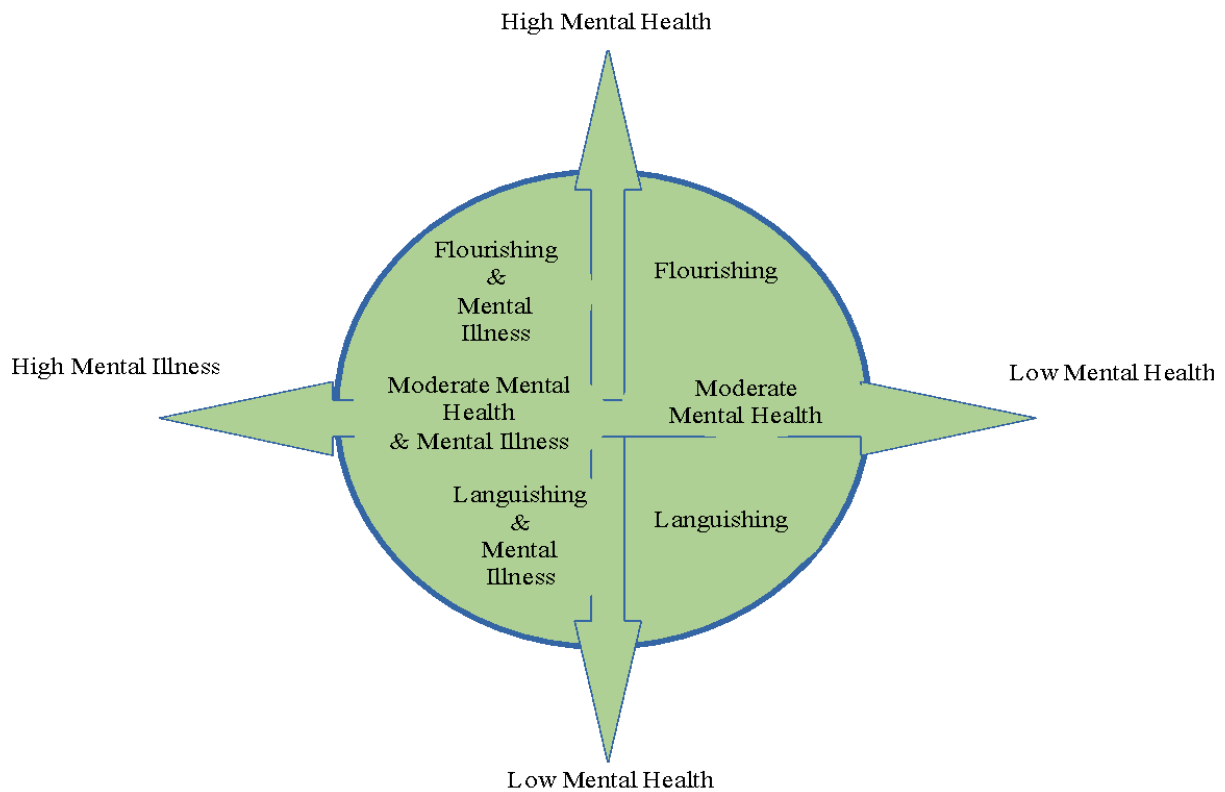


Diagram 1. Keyes' model of Well-being (2002)

There are two kinds of well-being: objective and subjective (Voukelatou et al., 2021):

- **Objective well-being** refers to living conditions and quality of life factors such as income, health and education. In these terms, well-being is beyond the individual and includes the ability of societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose, including quality of life.
- **Subjective well-being** includes an individual's perception of different aspects of their life, experiences and emotions, as well as attitudes and opinions towards life (Giapraki et al., 2020; WHO, 2022). In other words, subjective well-being refers to individuals' self-assessment of their life including life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional experiences. Similarly, in the PERMA-Profil model, proposed by Seligman and colleagues (2011), well-being is defined by high levels of five factors: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment.

## Resilience

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*Resilience involves an individual's ability to adapt to changes or challenges in life, and recover from adverse circumstances (Merchant et al., 2022; Musich et al., 2022).*

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More specifically, resilience is defined as the maintenance, or rapid recovery, during or after periods of stress, which may have occurred after a potentially traumatic event, difficult living conditions, a critical period of transition, or illness (Thomas et al., 2019). Resilient individuals have problem-solving skills, social competence and sense of purpose, and they generally have productive lives (WHO, 2021).

The capacity for resilience is directly related to successful ageing as well as to improved quality of life (Thomas et al., 2019). Older people are very likely to experience adversity in some form during the ageing process, whether it is a decline in physical or cognitive abilities, the loss of a loved one, or a decrease in social networks. Thus, when faced with age-related difficulties, their ability to demonstrate resilience becomes more and more important, not only for themselves but even for their caregivers (Nair et al., 2024). Resilience is considered simultaneously as an individual characteristic, a process, and an outcome (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2015). Enhancing resilience can be achieved by all people, despite disease and age, through active ageing which contributes to overall wellbeing (Ryff et al., 2021).

### Key components: physical, emotional, social and psychological well-being

Well-being is a broad and multidimensional concept. The first attempts to measure well-being were related to the concept of 'hedonic', or 'subjective', or 'emotional' well-being, all referring to the same component. Emotional well-being includes:

- life satisfaction
- positive affect, and
- overall sense of happiness experienced by an individual

Ryff (1989) expanded the definition of well-being to a more 'eudemonic' dimension that is 'psychological' well-being including six components as follows:

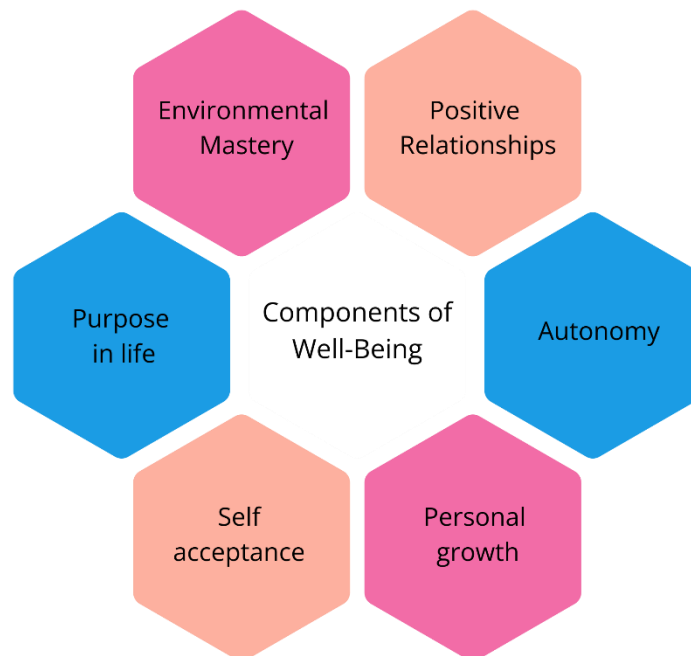


Diagram 2. Ryff's expanded definition of psychological well-being (1989)

Keyes (2002) added the component of social well-being to incorporate five optimal social functioning indicators, including social contribution (e.g., to volunteer for a good purpose), social integration (e.g., to have a sense of belonging to a group), social actualization (e.g., to have a sense that society is a good place to live), social acceptance (e.g., to have a sense that people are trustworthy), and social coherence (e.g., how society works is meaningful).

There are many factors that contribute to the well-being of older people, as follows:

- Physical: Physical factors, such as genetic inheritance, physical activity and health, as well as proper nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases are linked with the well-being of older people.
- Psychological: The mindset of older people, their optimism, self-confidence, and adaptability to new situations can make a positive contribution. The ability to

adapt to changes, the belief that one can face challenges, and the recognition of oneself as important and valued contribute to their resilience and wellbeing. Social: Friends, family relationships, participation in support groups, and community activities contribute to the resilience and well-being of older people. Also, environmental factors, such as the environment in which older people live, and whether they have access to health infrastructure, cultural centres, parks, and other recreational areas contribute to the well-being of older people (Abud et al., 2022).

## Section 2: Importance of well-being and resilience in ageing

Empirical studies have shown significant interactions between active ageing, well-being and resilience, as follows:

- **Health and Longevity**
  - Feeling happy and satisfied with life is linked to better health and longer life (Diener et al., 2018; Pocock et al., 2022).
- **Positive Emotions in Older Age**
  - Older people focus more on positive feelings, known as the positivity phenomenon (Ryff et al., 2021).
  - Eudemonic well-being (sense of purpose) and resilience help reduce age-related diseases (Kim et al., 2021).
- **Flourishing**
  - Flourishing, or having full mental health, protects against diseases, suicidal thoughts, and frequent use of health services (Keyes & Simoes, 2012; Keyes et al., 2012; Keyes & Grzywacz, 2005).
  - Flourishing also lowers the risk of depression and other mental health issues in the future (Keyes, Dhingra, & Simoes, 2010).
  - More flourishing leads to fewer mental health problems in older adults.
- **Active Ageing and Life Satisfaction**
  - Engaging in meaningful activities and participating in social events significantly enhances life satisfaction (Mayordomo et al., 2021).
  - Regular involvement in social and recreational activities improves well-being (Foster et al., 2021).
  - Having a strong peer support network is a major factor in life satisfaction (Yotsidi et al., 2023).

- **Resilience and Life Satisfaction**

- Resilience is closely linked to life satisfaction in older people (Lopez et al., 2020).
- Higher resilience is associated with higher scores on active ageing (Siltanen et al., 2020).
- Resilience protects against stress and promotes a positive outlook, improving quality of life (Liu et al., 2023).
- Older people with high resilience report better health and greater optimism (Bartholomaeus et al., 2019).
- Resilience and well-being support active ageing, as older people work on activities that enhance their abilities (Rantanen et al., 2019).
- Resilient older adults are more likely to stay engaged and maintain well-being despite age-related challenges.

- **Resilience and Health**

- Resilience helps limit the negative effects of declining health and social losses, maintaining well-being (Stern et al., 2023).
- High resilience is linked to better mental health, energy, pain management, physical outcomes, and recovery (Merchant et al., 2022; Zábó et al., 2023; WHO, 2021).
- A Finnish study found resilience helped 75-year-olds with early walking difficulties but not 85-year-olds with severe mobility issues (Siltanen et al., 2020).

Active ageing is associated with greater life satisfaction among older adults in European countries (Mayordomo et al., 2021). Resilience and well-being promote active ageing, as older adults striving for their well-being are more likely to seize opportunities for active engagement and maintain high levels of well-being despite facing age-related challenges.

## Self-Reflection Activities

### Well-being assessment

1. According to Keyes' model, well-being comprises of a) positive feelings about life (emotional well-being) and b) good functioning in life (psychological and social functioning). Please rate yourself on these dimensions, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 10 means “completely agree”.

Emotional well-being	Rate 1 - 10
Overall, I am satisfied with my life.	
I feel happy most of the time.	
I experience positive emotions regularly.	
<b>Emotional well-being sum</b>	
<b>Emotional well-being mean (sum/ 3)</b>	
Psychological well-being	
Self-acceptance: I have a positive attitude toward myself, and I accept both my good and bad qualities.	
Positive relations: I have warm, trusting and intimate relationships with others.	
Autonomy: I am independent, and I can guide and evaluate my behavior based on internalized standards and values.	
Environmental mastery: I am competent in managing my environment, and I can choose or create contexts suitable to my needs.	
Purpose in life: I have a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	
Personal growth: I feel that I am continuing to grow and I am open to new experiences.	
<b>Psychological well-being sum</b>	
<b>Psychological well-being mean (sum/ 6)</b>	
Social well-being	
Social integration: I feel that I belong in my community and society.	
Social contribution: I feel that I am a vital member of society and I have something of value to give to the world.	
Social coherence: I experience my social world as sensible, predictable and coherent.	
Social acceptance: I trust others and I believe that they are capable of kindness.	
Social actualization: I believe that society is a good place to live.	
<b>Social well-being sum</b>	
<b>Social well-being mean (sum/5)</b>	

- For each well-being aspect draw a line that represents the mean to the respective column in the diagram below so that you can visualize these aspects in your life:

10		10
1		1
Emotional well-being	Psychological well-being	Social well-being

- Reflect on your well-being assessment. What do you notice? Which aspects need to be strengthened? What are some simple steps that you can take to strengthen them?

The aspects that need to be strengthened are:

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Some simple steps that I can take to strengthen them are:

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What have you learned about yourself and what are you willing to do in your life to enhance your well-being?

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## Resilience assessment

1. What is resilience for you?

2. What are the challenges that you have already overcome?

3. What are the resources (mindsets, people, emotions, tools, strategies) that have helped you overcome these challenges?

4. What have you learned from your resilience assessment? How can you use your resources to the new challenges that you face in your life?



## Quiz

1. Which one of the following describes well-being fully:
  - A. Good functioning in life
  - B. Flourishing
  - C. Positive feelings about life
2. Psychological well-being is also defined as:
  - A. Emotional well-being
  - B. Eudemonic well-being
  - C. Subjective well-being
3. Resilience has been found to alleviate all the following except from:
  - A. Pain
  - B. Mobility problems
  - C. Neuromuscular impairments

\*Correct answers: 1-B, 2-B, 3-C

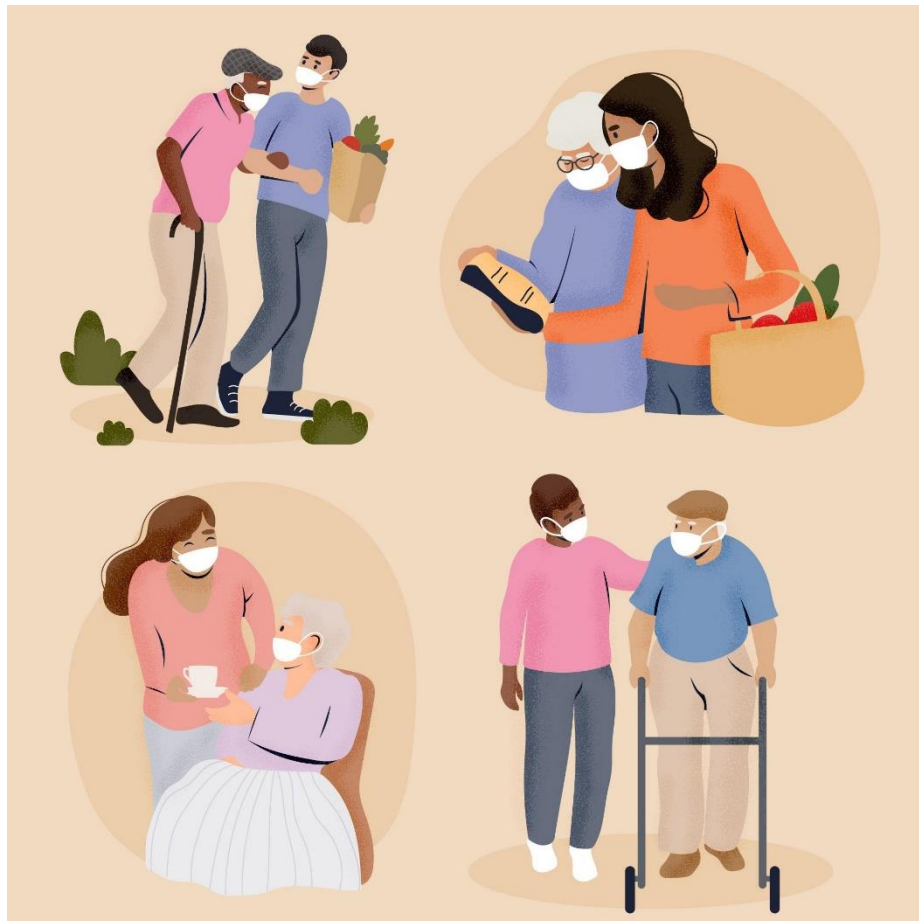


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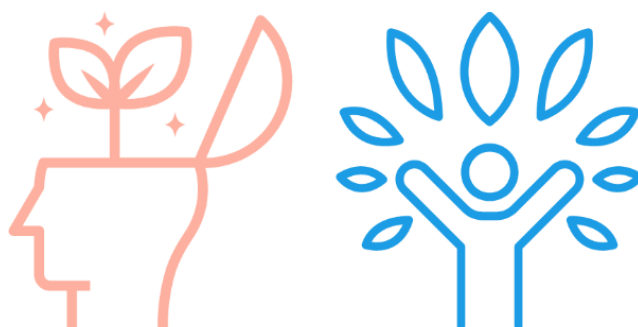
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## Module 2: Positive and active ageing, well-being and resilience

### Section 1: Positive and Active Ageing

The concept of positive and active ageing has evolved significantly over the last centuries. Historically, older adults were often perceived as passive recipients of care (Shepherd & Brochu, 2021), largely side-lined from societal participation once they retired. This view began to shift during the Enlightenment and Romanticism periods, which laid the groundwork for a more dynamic understanding of ageing.

During the Enlightenment, there was an emphasis on reason, progress, and the potential for self-improvement at any age (Corrie, 2017). Thinkers like Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder promoted the idea that personal development and education should be lifelong pursuits (Danzer, 2019; Loch, 2019). The Romantic period further enriched this perspective by valuing individual experience, emotional depth, and the intrinsic worth of personal growth throughout one's life. This era recognized that ageing could bring wisdom, creativity, and a deeper connection to culture and nature (Mc Callum, 2001).



Source: canva.com

In modern times, these historical perspectives have merged with contemporary research in gerontology and psychology to form a more holistic view of ageing. Positive and active ageing now encompasses not only physical health but also mental, emotional, and social well-being (Gibson & Singleton, 2012). This evolving perception emphasizes that ageing is not just a decline but a continuation of growth and development, where older adults can remain active, engaged, and valuable members of society.

## Continuous personal development

Continuous personal development is central to the concept of positive and active ageing. This approach encourages individuals to take an active role in their own growth, learning, and well-being throughout their lives.

Continuous personal development (or sometimes self-cultivation) involves a commitment to:

- Lifelong learning is where individuals seek to expand their knowledge, skills, and experiences. This can include formal education, such as taking courses or attending workshops, as well as informal learning through hobbies, travel, and social interactions.
- It is maintaining mental agility, emotional health, and social connections. It helps older adults to stay engaged with the world around them, fostering a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Engaging in new activities, exploring different interests, and adapting to changes are all part of this ongoing process.
- Moreover, self-cultivation aligns with the principles of [Bildung](#) (Andersen, 2021), which stresses the importance of cultural and moral development. This lifelong educational journey not only enhances individual well-being but also contributes to a more informed, empathetic, and cohesive society. By embracing self-cultivation and continuous personal development, older adults can lead enriched lives and continue to contribute meaningfully to their communities (Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen; DAFNI KEK, 2022).

## Section 2: Key challenges faced by older adults

As individuals age, they might be facing challenges that can impact their quality of life and well-being. These challenges might be health-related issues, social isolation, ageism, and economic concerns. Understanding and addressing these challenges are essential to living fulfilling and healthy lives.

### Ageism and societal attitudes

*"Ageism refers to stereotyping (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) against others or oneself because of age."*

(World Health Organization, 2021)

Negative societal attitudes can marginalize older adults, and limit their opportunities for employment, social participation, and access to resources. Ageist attitudes contribute to stereotypes that portray older adults as frail, dependent, and less capable,

perpetuating discrimination in various domains of life. [Addressing ageism](#) requires challenging stereotypes, promoting intergenerational understanding, and advocating for policies that promote inclusion and respect for older adults' contributions to society.

### Financial and economic concerns

Financial security is a significant concern for many older adults, particularly those living on fixed incomes or pensions. Economic challenges may arise due to inadequate retirement savings, rising healthcare costs, inflation, or unexpected expenses. Older adults may face difficulties in affording essential needs such as housing, utilities, and healthcare services, impacting their overall well-being and quality of life. Without adequate financial resources, one may also struggle with social isolation and limited access to recreational activities that promote mental and physical health. Access to financial planning resources, pension support, and social safety nets are essential in mitigating economic hardships and ensuring financial stability for older adults. Additionally, community programs that offer assistance with budgeting, debt management, and access to affordable healthcare can provide much-needed support and enhance the financial security of the elderly.

### Health-related challenges

As people age, they are more susceptible to chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and arthritis (Rijken et al., 2005). These conditions often require ongoing medical attention, medication management, and lifestyle adjustments to maintain optimal health. Physical mobility may also become a concern due to conditions like osteoporosis or joint problems, affecting independence and daily activities (Martin et al., 2002). Additionally, cognitive health is another aspect that requires monitoring, as conditions like dementia and Alzheimer's disease pose significant challenges both for individuals and their caregivers (Shaji et al., 2002). Access to healthcare services, affordability of treatments, and health literacy are critical factors in addressing these challenges effectively.

### Social isolation and unhappiness

Increasing numbers of one-person households, combined with increased life expectancies, have and continue to increase the risk of experiencing isolation, loneliness, and neglect amongst the elderly (Snell, 2017). Thus, social isolation and loneliness are prevalent among older adults and can have profound effects on mental and emotional well-being. Factors such as the loss of a spouse or friends, retirement, mobility limitations, and geographic relocation contribute to social disconnection.

[The Belgian biannual National Happiness Report](#), for example, shows an increase in the anxiety level of the Belgian population throughout the last survey rounds, with people

with low optimism for the future, and low satisfaction with their safety/security having a significantly increased risk of experiencing anxiety. Additionally, those who do feel lonely are twice as likely also to feel unhappy. Consequently, respondents with a low engagement in permanent relationships, singles and people suffering from poor physical health have experienced loneliness most often (NN Leerstoel 'Perspectieven op een lang en gelukkig leven' UGent, 2020).

### Section 3: Benefits of Staying Active

#### Physical Well-Being: Maintaining Health and Vitality

Physical well-being plays a crucial role in maintaining health and quality of life. Regular physical exercise, combined with proper nutrition, significantly contributes to overall well-being and longevity.

As one ages, maintaining an active lifestyle becomes increasingly important to preserve

- ✓ mobility,
- ✓ independence, and vitality.
- ✓ enhances cardiovascular health,
- ✓ improves muscle strength and flexibility,
- ✓ manages weight,
- ✓ promotes mental well-being by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.



Source: canva.com

Creating a balanced exercise routine is essential to achieving comprehensive physical fitness, especially as we age. This involves combining various types of exercise to address different aspects of health and mobility. Some tips are:

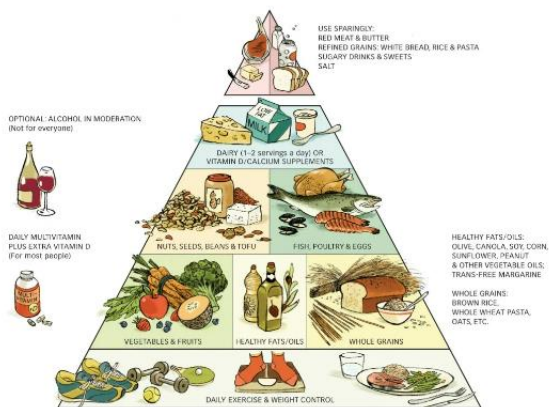
1. Engaging in **aerobic activities** such as brisk walking, swimming, or cycling can significantly boost cardiovascular health. To help track your progress and monitor your heart rate during these exercises, you can use apps like "[Heart Rate Monitor](#)". In Europe, e.g. [EuropeActive](#) is advocating for increased physical activity.



Copyright © 2008. For more information about *The Healthy Eating Pyramid*, please see *The Nutrition Source*, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, [www.thenutritionsource.org](http://www.thenutritionsource.org), and *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*, by Walter C. Willet

## THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health



2. **Strength training** is equally important and can be incorporated into your routine using light weights or resistance bands. These exercises help maintain muscle strength and bone density, which are crucial for preventing age-related muscle loss and osteoporosis. Fitness apps like "[FitOn](#)" or YouTube channels like "[Yes2Next](#)" offer senior-specific workout routines that you can follow to ensure you are performing these exercises correctly and safely.

3. **Flexibility exercises** are also a key component of a well-rounded fitness regimen. [Stretching](#), [Yoga](#), and [Tai Chi](#) can improve your range of motion and prevent stiffness. These activities not only enhance physical flexibility but also contribute to better

balance and coordination, reducing the risk of falls. Many online resources and local community centers offer classes specifically tailored for older adults, making it easy to integrate these exercises into your daily routine.

By combining aerobic activities, strength training, and flexibility exercises, you can achieve a balanced exercise routine that supports overall health and mobility.

Alongside physical exercise, the role of nutrition cannot be overstated. **Nutrition plays a vital role in supporting physical health and well-being in older adults.** Essential nutrients are necessary for

- ✓ maintaining energy levels,
- ✓ supporting immune function,
- ✓ preventing chronic diseases.

Healthy eating habits and proper meal planning are crucial components of a well-rounded approach to nutrition. You require adequate intake of essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber.

1. A good place to start might be “[MyPlate initiative](#)” for older adults, provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which offers tailored dietary guidelines and resources to help seniors make healthier food choices to support immune function and prevent chronic diseases.
2. [The European Ageing Network with its report on nutritional care](#) (European Ageing Network, 2021) and guidelines for promoting well-nutrition in elderly care settings are a good read to get better informed. Concrete senior-friendly suggestions and recipes can be found on many, many cooking pages, e.g. [chefkoch.de](#), [senior-compagnie.fr](#), [gezondidee.mumc.nl](#), [varnastarost.si](#)

So not only can meal planning help you maintain a balanced diet and meet your nutritional needs, but it can also positively support one's general well-being and might help with financial challenges in food preparation.

### Mental and Cognitive Well-Being: Enhancing Cognitive Function and Emotional Health

Enhanced mental and emotional well-being is a critical aspect of positive and active ageing. Engaging in lifelong learning and self-cultivation can significantly bolster cognitive function and emotional health (Tabibnia & Dan, 2018).

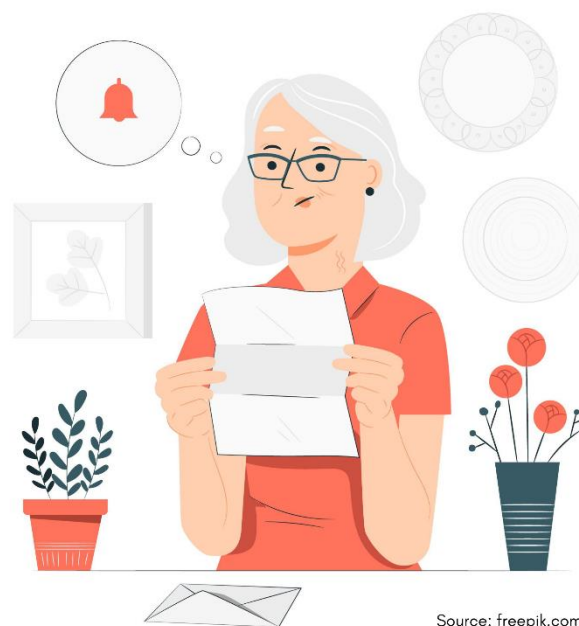
- Cognitive stimulation: Activities such as reading, puzzles, and learning new skills stimulate the brain, helping to maintain mental sharpness and delay cognitive decline.
- Emotional well-being is fostered through:
  - mindfulness practices like meditation and breathing exercises
  - stress management techniques, and emotional self-regulation. By continually challenging the mind and managing emotional health, older adults can achieve a greater sense of fulfilment, reduce feelings of anxiety and depression, and enhance their overall quality of life.
- Lifelong learning: The importance of lifelong learning for older adults cannot be overstated due to the compelling evidence of the positive effects of learning on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of older individuals.



## Benefits of Lifelong Learning

- Early research into older adult learning highlighted its benefits, such as maintaining cognitive function and promoting social inclusion (Schmidt-Hertha, Formosa, & Fragoso, 2019).
- Learning new skills, staying mentally active, and fostering social connections. For instance, activities like painting, knitting, reading clubs, and discussions about current affairs not only keep the mind sharp but also provide opportunities for social interaction and emotional enrichment (Culture on Prescription: Training Kit, 2024).
- The benefits of lifelong learning extend beyond individual improvement, impacting the broader social and community context by fostering active ageing and social inclusion. Research has indicated that participating in educational activities can enhance older adults' sense of **empowerment, agency, and independence**.

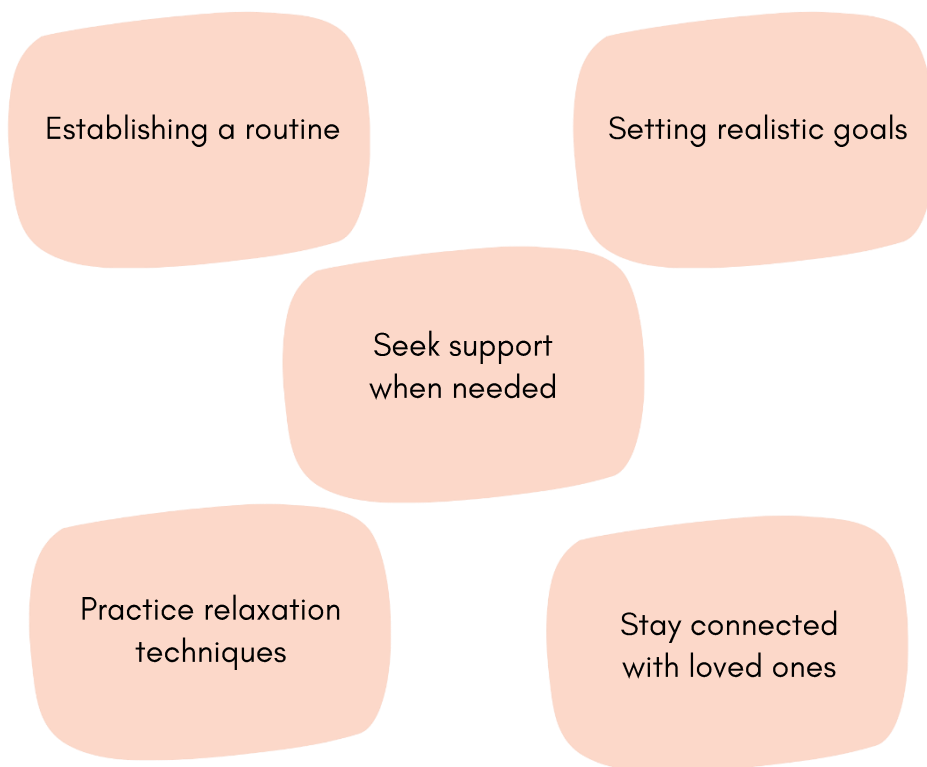
Learning in later life is linked with improved quality of life and well-being, suggesting that educational opportunities should be made more accessible to older adults to support their mental health and cognitive function. Therefore, promoting lifelong learning is crucial for enhancing the mental well-being of older adults and enabling them to lead fulfilling lives (Culture on Prescription: Training Kit, 2024).



Source: freepik.com

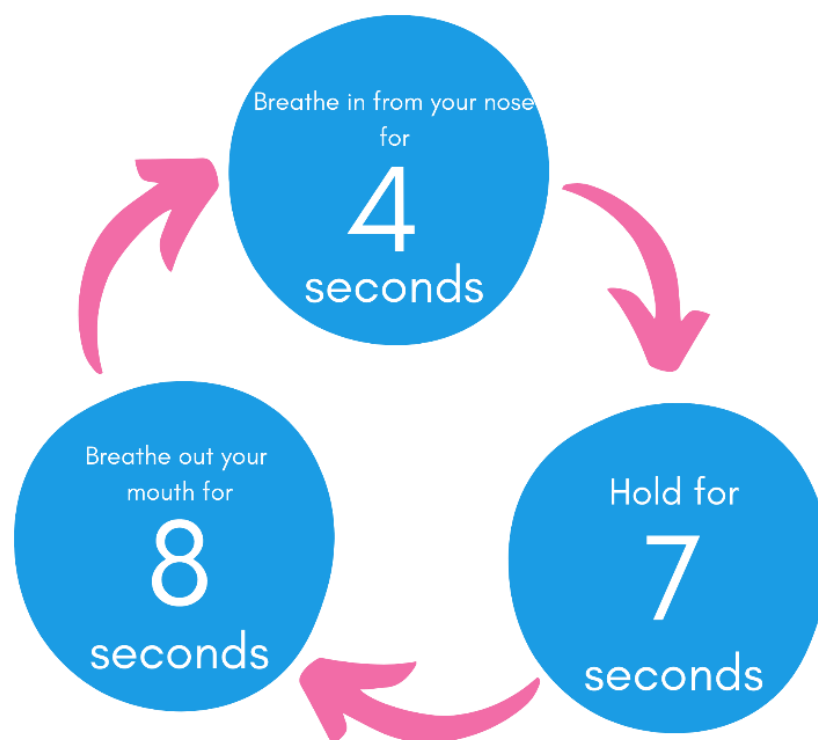
## Emotional Health: Managing Stress and Anxiety

Managing stress and anxiety is crucial for mental well-being. Chronic stress and anxiety can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental health, leading to issues such as depression, cardiovascular problems, and weakened immune function. Techniques for managing stress and anxiety include:



Emotional regulation is another essential aspect of maintaining emotional health. This involves recognizing and understanding one's emotions, as well as developing strategies to manage and express them in healthy ways. Techniques such as journaling, talking to a trusted friend or counsellor, and engaging in creative outlets like painting or music can be very beneficial.

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques are particularly effective in promoting emotional regulation and reducing stress. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment without judgement, which can help individuals become more aware of their thoughts and feelings and manage them more effectively. One of the simplest and most effective mindfulness practices is breathing exercises. Deep breathing can help calm the nervous system, reduce stress, and improve mental clarity. A common technique is the **4-7-8 breathing exercise**, where individuals breathe in for four counts, hold for seven counts, and exhale for eight counts. This practice can be done anywhere and helps in grounding and centering the mind.



[Guided meditation](#) and progressive muscle relaxation are other valuable mindfulness techniques. Guided meditation involves following a narrator’s instructions to focus the mind and relax the body. This practice can help reduce anxiety, improve concentration, and foster a sense of peace. Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and then slowly relaxing each muscle group in the body. This technique helps reduce physical

tension and promotes overall relaxation. Both methods are highly effective in managing stress and enhancing emotional well-being.

Summarizing the most important factors for citizens to achieve happiness, the Happiness Belgian Report lists having peace of mind (19.9%), satisfaction with one's financial situation (17%), and autonomy/involvement/competence (16.7%). It also assessed the most crucial factors for Belgians to remain resistant to unhappiness during times of crisis as peace of mind (65%), satisfaction with social contacts (50%), and not feeling lonely (49%). Being significantly influenced by COVID, the answers of the survey surprisingly list good subjective health as the least important factor (37%) to prevent unhappiness during times of crisis (NN Leerstoel 'Perspectieven op een lang en gelukkig leven' UGent, 2020).

### Social Engagement: Fostering Connections and Community Engagement

Equally important is the strengthening of social connections, which are essential for the holistic well-being of all adults, especially older adults.

- Maintaining and nurturing social networks can prevent isolation and loneliness, which are common challenges as people age (Courtin & Knapp, 2015). Social engagement through community involvement, group activities, and maintaining relationships with family and friends creates a support system that is crucial for emotional health.

Participating in social and cultural activities, such as clubs, and volunteer work provides opportunities for meaningful interactions and shared experiences. These connections not only offer emotional support but also contribute to a sense of belonging and purpose, which is vital for sustaining mental and emotional health.



Source: canva.com

### Practical Implementation

Incorporating physical, mental, and social activities into one's daily routines is essential for maintaining overall health and well-being, particularly for older adults. This chapter provides practical strategies and examples to help you integrate these activities seamlessly into your everyday life, ensuring a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle.

## Physical activities:

### Start with Simple Exercises

Begin your day with a gentle stretching routine to improve flexibility and prevent stiffness. Consider activities such as yoga or Tai Chi, which are low-impact and beneficial for balance and coordination. Online resources and community centres often offer classes specifically designed for older adults.

### Engage in Aerobic Exercises

Incorporate aerobic activities such as brisk walking, swimming, or cycling into your daily routine to boost cardiovascular health. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity several days of the week. Use apps to track your heart rate and ensure you are exercising at the appropriate level.

### Include Strength Training

Strength training is crucial for maintaining muscle mass and bone density. Use light weights or resistance bands for exercises that target major muscle groups. YouTube offers senior-specific workouts that you can follow at home. Aim to perform strength training exercises at two days a week.

### Use Technology for Motivation

Fitness trackers and apps can help you set goals, monitor progress, and stay motivated. Many fitness apps are designed with older adults in mind, offering easy-to-follow instructions and tracking features.

## Mental Activities

### Stimulate Your Brain

Engage in activities that challenge your mind and promote cognitive health. Puzzles, such as crosswords and Sudoku, are excellent for stimulating the brain. Additionally, consider even taking on a hobby, such as playing a musical instrument, learning a new language, or engaging in arts and crafts. Although it might seem daunting at first, even tiny baby steps in learning something new can bring big benefits.

### Practice Lifelong Learning

Maybe enroll in courses or workshops to continue learning and stay mentally active. Many universities and community colleges offer classes for older adults. Online platforms provide opportunities to learn from home.

### Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques can significantly benefit mental health. Simple breathing exercises, such as the 4-7-8 technique, can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity. Guided meditation and progressive muscle relaxation are also effective methods for managing stress.



## Social Activities

### Stay connected

Maintaining social connections is essential for emotional and mental well-being. Make an effort to stay in touch with family and friends through regular phone calls, video chats, or social media. Platforms like Zoom and Skype make it easy to stay connected, even from a distance.

### Participate in Community Activities

Consider joining clubs, groups, or community activities that interest you. Whether it is a book club, gardening group, or local choir, these activities provide opportunities for social interaction and shared experiences. Community centers and senior organizations often offer programs tailored to older adults.

### Attend Social Events

Take part in social events and activities in your community. This could include attending festivals, workshops, or public meetings. These events provide platforms for interaction and help you stay connected to your local environment.

### Volunteer Your Time

Volunteering is a rewarding way to stay socially engaged and contribute to your community. Many organizations welcome older volunteers, and there are various opportunities available, from mentoring young people to helping at local charities.

### Explore Social Apps

There are several apps designed to help older adults connect with others. Apps like "Nextdoor" connect you with neighbors and local events, while "Meetup" allows you to find and join groups based on your interests.

### Travel and Explore

If possible, even travel and explore new places. Travelling can provide new experiences and opportunities to meet people. Consider joining travel groups that cater to older adults for safe and enjoyable travel experiences.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many aspects of positive and active ageing, with emphasis on the importance of continuous personal development, physical well-being, mental and cognitive health, emotional stability and social engagement. It is evident that ageing goes beyond the physical decline but it is a journey of growth and development, where older adults can contribute meaningfully to society and lead enriched lives.

It is crucial to address the key challenges such as economic concerns, health-related issues and social isolation by promoting lifelong learning, mindfulness, relaxation techniques and social activities to maintain mental agility, emotional health and social connections.



Source: freepik.com

## Quiz

1. What is one key benefit of maintaining and nurturing social networks for older adults?

- A) Financial stability
- B) Prevention of isolation and loneliness
- C) Increased physical strength

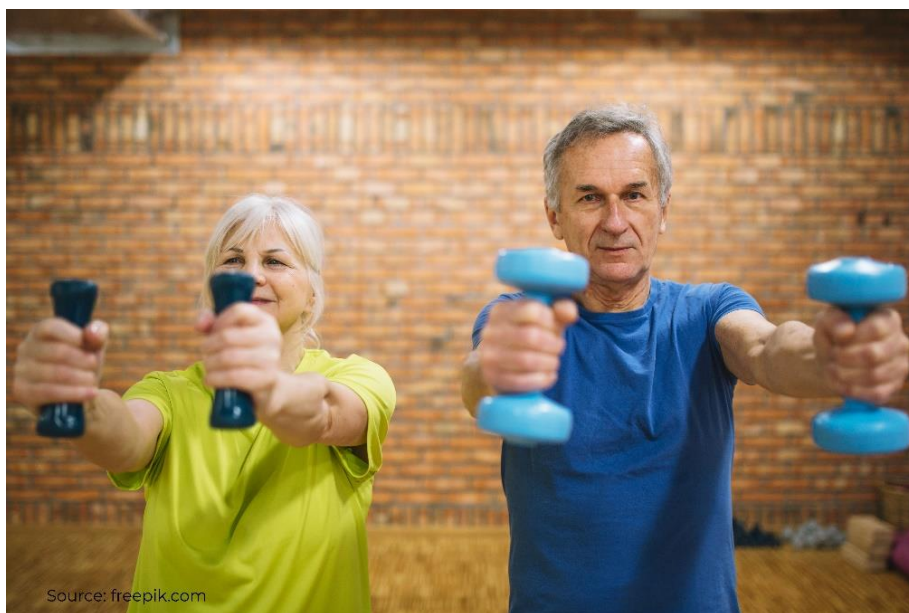
2. Which type of exercise is recommended for maintaining muscle mass and bone density in older adults?

- A) Mindfulness exercises
- B) Stretching routines
- C) Strength training

3. What is a suggested activity for older adults to stay mentally active and challenge their minds?

- A) Engaging in arts and crafts
- B) Attending at social events
- C) Travelling to new places

\*Correct answers: 1-B, 2-C, 3-A



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## Module 3: Examples and case studies through Positive Psychology practices

### Introduction

Positive Psychology focuses on the study and promotion of well-being, happiness, and positive human functioning. It emphasizes strengths, virtues, and factors that contribute to a fulfilling life (Seligman, 2002). Incorporating Positive Psychology practices can significantly enhance the quality of life for the elderly, fostering both emotional and mental well-being. For caregivers, these practices offer valuable tools to support their loved ones while also maintaining their own well-being.

This module features examples and case studies of people whose lives have been positively transformed through Positive Psychology practices. It is divided into four sections:

- Section 1: Understanding Positive Psychology,
- Section 2. Case Studies,
- Section 3. Positive Psychology Practices and Strategies and,
- Section 4. Tips for Caregivers

### Section 1: Understanding Positive Psychology

#### Attempts to define and understand Positive Psychology

In an attempt to define Positive Psychology and better understand its nature and context, we may assume that it is the scientific study of what makes life worth living. It focuses on human strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. It shifts the emphasis from solely treating mental illness to enhancing well-being and happiness.

In further understanding Positive Psychology, the **PERMA** model proposed by Martin Seligman (**P**ositive **E**motions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **E**ngagement, **A**ccomplishments), one of the prevalent models of this scientific area, highlights the key concepts of Positive Psychology:

#### 1. Positive Emotions:

- **Joy:** Experiencing happiness and delight in the moment. For the elderly, joy can be found in small daily activities, engaging in hobbies, or spending time with loved ones.

- **Gratitude:** Recognizing and appreciating the good things in life. Practicing gratitude can involve keeping a gratitude journal, where one lists things they are thankful for each day.
- **Serenity:** Feeling calm and content. This can be achieved through activities such as meditation, gentle exercise, or spending time in nature.

## 2. Engagement:

- Being deeply involved in activities that challenge and absorb you. This state, often referred to as "flow," is when people lose track of time because they are so engrossed in what they are doing. For the elderly, this could be gardening, painting, or solving puzzles.

## 3. Relationships:

- Fostering meaningful connections with others. Positive relationships are a cornerstone of well-being. For the elderly, maintaining social connections can involve regular visits from family and friends, participating in community activities, or joining clubs and groups.

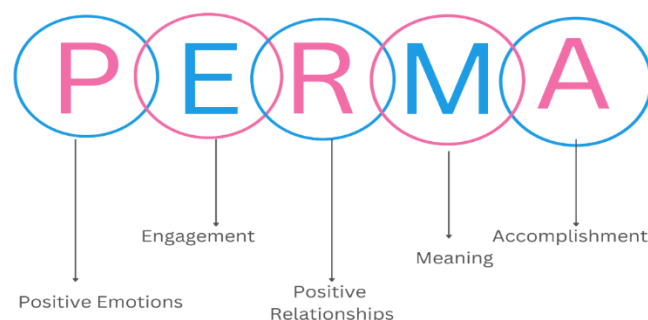
## 4. Meaning:

- Having a purpose or feeling that life is valuable and makes sense. Meaning can be found through various avenues such as spirituality, volunteering, or pursuing lifelong passions. For caregivers, this might come from the fulfilment of providing care and support to loved ones.

## 5. Accomplishments:

- Achieving goals and gaining a sense of mastery. This involves setting and reaching personal goals, no matter how small, which provides a sense of pride and achievement. For the elderly, accomplishments might include learning a new skill, completing a project, or maintaining physical health.

### Introducing a new theory of Well-Being





## Benefits of Positive Psychology for the Elderly and Caregivers

Positive Psychology holds a number of benefits for both the elderly and caregivers:

### 1. Improved Mental Health:

Positive Psychology practices can lead to a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety, promoting a more positive outlook on life. Techniques such as **gratitude journaling** and **mindfulness** can improve mood and emotional stability.

### 2. Enhanced Resilience:

Developing resilience helps individuals cope better with life's challenges and bounce back from setbacks. Positive Psychology encourages building resilience through **positive emotions**, **supportive relationships**, and **finding meaning in experiences**.

### 3. Reduced Stress and Anxiety:

Practices such as **mindfulness meditation**, **deep breathing exercises**, and engaging in enjoyable activities can significantly **lower stress levels**. Both the elderly and their caregivers can benefit from **stress-reducing techniques** that help them manage their responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed.

### 4. Greater Life Satisfaction:

Engaging in **activities that bring joy**, maintaining **meaningful relationships**, and **achieving personal goals** contribute to **overall life satisfaction**. For the elderly, this might mean finding **new hobbies or rekindling old ones**, and for caregivers, finding **balance and personal fulfilment** in their roles.

## Section 2: Case studies

Below are case studies of individuals whose lives have been positively transformed through Positive Psychology:

### Case study 1: Heather embracing Positive Psychology in later life

**Background:** Heather Lee, a vibrant and spirited 96-year-old woman, has an inspiring story of resilience and positive transformation. Heather proudly embraces her age and views ageing as an achievement to be celebrated. Heather's life took a significant turn when her husband passed away. His parting words *"Now is the time to show your mettle"* became a mantra for her. She recognized she needed to become more **self-assertive** and **independent**. This realization marked the beginning of her journey towards self-improvement and resilience.

After her husband's death, Heather discovered a compulsion to walk. Walking became a form of grief therapy for her. She found solace and strength in the act of walking, and the faster she walked, the better she felt. This newfound passion for physical activity not only helped her cope with grief but also set her on a path towards becoming an accomplished athlete.

**Achievements and Recognition:** In 2011, at the age of 84, Heather's physiotherapist suggested she participate in the Masters Games in Adelaide. She accepted the challenge and, to her surprise, won four gold medals, breaking world records in the process. This achievement ignited a desire in Heather to continually push her limits and strive for excellence.

**Positive Psychology and Personal Growth:** Heather's story is a shining example of how positive psychology can lead to personal growth and fulfilment in later life. She has learned to embrace ageing, viewing it as an opportunity rather than a limitation. Heather has become more philosophical, accepting the ageing process with grace and wisdom. Her resilience and positive outlook have allowed her to continue achieving her goals and inspiring others.

### Key Lessons and Recommendations:

**Embrace Ageing:** View ageing as an achievement and an opportunity for personal growth.

**Stay Physically Active:** Engage in physical activities, even simple exercises at home, to maintain physical and mental health.

**Cultivate Resilience:** Use challenges and setbacks as opportunities to develop resilience and self-assertiveness.

**Share Knowledge:** Pass on wisdom and experiences to younger generations, fostering a sense of community and continuity.

**Stay Engaged:** Keep the mind active and find new passions or hobbies to pursue.

**Find Meaning:** Seek out activities and relationships that provide a sense of purpose and fulfilment, enhancing overall well-being.

**Use Strengths:** Identify and utilize personal strengths to navigate life's challenges and achieve personal goals, reinforcing self-esteem and

**Video:** Positive ageing-Heather's story-3 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZRxyhGXOkw>

**(Source:** <https://www.health.gov.au/news/heathers-story-living-life-to-the-fullest-one-step-at-a-time>**)**

### Case study 2: Peter overcoming adversity through Positive Psychology

**Background:** Peter Dornan, an 80-year-old physiotherapist, embodies a life of resilience, positivity and continuous self-improvement. Despite acknowledging the challenges of ageing, Peter lives each day with the same vigour and determination as he did in his younger years. His story is a powerful illustration of how positive psychology can profoundly impact the lives of older adults.

**A Life-Altering Diagnosis:** At 52, Peter was diagnosed with prostate cancer, a turning point that deeply impacted his life. The diagnosis and subsequent surgery brought severe

side effects, leaving Peter unable to work, exercise, or engage in intimate relationships. Struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts, Peter once again tapped into his inner resilience. He refused to succumb to despair and sought ways to navigate his new reality.

**Building a Support Network:** Determined to find support, Peter placed an ad seeking others experiencing similar struggles. The response was overwhelming; 70 men and their partners attended the first meeting. Over the next 20 years, Peter's initiative grew into a significant support network, addressing various aspects of prostate cancer. This group evolved into the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, becoming the leading consumer body for prostate cancer in the country. Peter's efforts not only provided vital support to many but also contributed to broader awareness and advocacy for prostate cancer patients.

**Embracing Positive Psychology and Resilience:** Peter's journey highlights the critical role of positive psychology in overcoming adversity. His experiences taught him that survival and fulfilment often require struggle and perseverance. By continuously challenging himself and maintaining a proactive approach to life, Peter has been able to thrive despite his setbacks.

#### **Key Lessons and Recommendations:**

**Harness Inner Strength:** Recognize and utilize the inner resilience and strength that exists within you to overcome challenges.

**Seek Support:** Building a support network can provide invaluable assistance and camaraderie during difficult times.

**Stay Physically Active:** Engage in physical activities to maintain physical and mental health, even in the face of adversity.

**Embrace Positivity:** Focus on what you have and celebrate life daily, rather than dwelling on potential limitations.

**Contribute to the Community:** Use personal experiences to support and inspire others facing similar challenges.

**Find Meaning:** Seek out activities and relationships that provide a sense of purpose and fulfilment, enhancing overall well-being.

**Use Strengths:** Identify and utilize personal strengths to navigate life's challenges and achieve personal goals, reinforcing self-esteem and confidence.

**Video:** Positive ageing–Peter’s story–3 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLcgRcKbwVE>

(Source: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/peters-story-conquering-lifes-greatest-challenges> )

### Case Study 3: Isabel ageing with purpose and passion

**Background:** Isabel Allende, a renowned author, as she navigates the challenges and opportunities of ageing. At 71, Isabel shares her personal reflections, the inspiration she draws from others, and her strategies for maintaining passion and purpose in her later years. Her story provides valuable insights into the psychological and emotional aspects of ageing, highlighting the importance of attitude, resilience, and community support.

She fears losing independence but finds comfort in Ram Dass's teaching that accepting dependency can reduce suffering. She views her body's changes with tenderness and appreciates the help she receives.

**Gains and Freedom:** Ageing has freed Isabel from societal and personal expectations. She no longer needs to prove herself and focuses on enjoying life, letting go of negative emotions. She values the mental clarity that comes from releasing these burdens.

**Embracing Vulnerability and Spirituality:** Isabel sees vulnerability as a strength. Spirituality and meditation help her stay present and mindful. She finds spirituality essential for her well-being.

**Maintaining Passion and Positive Attitude:** Isabel believes in consciously maintaining passion. She embraces life’s ups and downs, staying open to love and engagement. Even when she feels flat, she simulates passion to reignite genuine enthusiasm, highlighting the importance of a positive attitude.

### Key Lessons and Recommendations:

**Inspiration from Others:** Finding motivation from those who have made significant contributions later in life.

**Acceptance and Resilience:** Accepting changes and focusing on resilience to enhance quality of life.

**Freedom and Letting Go:** Aging can bring freedom from expectations, allowing for greater enjoyment.

**Spirituality and Mindfulness:** Spirituality and mindfulness improve well-being and peace.

**Positive Attitude:** Maintaining a positive attitude and passion is crucial for graceful ageing.

**Use Strengths:** Identify and utilize personal strengths to navigate life's challenges and achieve personal goals, reinforcing self-esteem and confidence.

**Video:** Isabel Allende: How to live passionately-no matter your age  
TED <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ifMRNag2XU&t=1s>

**(Source:** <https://shorturl.at/cjt7E>)

These real-life case studies highlight how Positive Psychology practices, such as mindfulness meditation, and positive affirmations, can lead to significant improvements in the lives of elderly individuals, enhancing their emotional well-being, fostering positive social connections, and building resilience (Swaranalatha et al., 2024).

### Section 3: Positive Psychology Practices and Strategies

Positive Psychology focuses on enhancing well-being and happiness through various practices and strategies. This section explores key Positive Psychology Practices, such as: **Gratitude Journaling, Mindfulness Meditation, Positive Affirmations, and Strength-Based Activities.** Each practice is detailed with steps on how to start, techniques, and the benefits they offer.

#### Gratitude Journaling

How to start	Benefits
<p><b>Choose a Dedicated Notebook:</b> Select a special notebook solely for gratitude journaling. This can be a simple spiral notebook or a more ornate journal, whatever feels personal and motivating.</p>	<p><b>Improved Mood:</b> Reflecting on things you're grateful for helps shift your focus from negative to positive, leading to a more optimistic outlook and improved mood.</p>
<p><b>Write Down Three Things You're Grateful For Each Day:</b> Each day, take a few minutes to write down three things you are grateful for. These can be big things like a supportive family or small moments like a warm cup of coffee in the morning. For example "I am grateful for spending time with my family" and "I am grateful for this sunny day".</p>	<p><b>Better Sleep:</b> Ending your day with gratitude journaling can promote relaxation and reduce stress, improving sleep quality.</p> <p><b>Increased Well-Being:</b> Regularly acknowledging and appreciating the good things in your life fosters a deeper sense of well-being and satisfaction.</p>

## Mindfulness Meditation

Techniques	Daily Practices	Benefits
<p><b>Focused Breathing:</b> Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of the air entering and leaving your body. If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.</p> <p><b>Video:</b> <a href="#">5 Minute Guided Meditation</a></p> <p><b>Body Scan:</b> Lie down and close your eyes. Slowly focus on each part of your body, starting from your toes and moving up to your head, noticing any sensations or tension without judgment.</p> <p><b>Video:</b> <a href="#">10 Minute Guided Body Scan Meditation</a></p> <p><b>Mindful Walking:</b> Take a walk and pay close attention to the sensations in your body as you move. Notice the feeling of your feet touching the ground, the rhythm of your steps, and the environment around you.</p> <p><b>Video:</b> <a href="#">15 Minute Mindful Walking Meditation</a></p>	<p><b>Set a Regular Schedule:</b> Consistency is key to building a meditation practice. Choose a time and place where you can meditate without interruptions, aiming for at least 10-15 minutes daily.</p> <p><b>Start Small:</b> If you're new to meditation, start with short sessions and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable.</p>	<p><b>Stress Reduction:</b> Mindfulness meditation promotes relaxation and helps calm the mind, reducing stress and anxiety.</p> <p><b>Improved Focus and Concentration:</b> Regular practice enhances attentional control and cognitive function, leading to improved focus and productivity.</p> <p><b>Emotional Regulation:</b> By observing thoughts and emotions without attachment, mindfulness meditation cultivates greater emotional resilience and regulation.</p>

## Positive affirmations



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Crafting Affirmations	Integrating into Routines	Benefits
<p><b>Personalize Your Affirmations:</b> Tailor affirmations to address specific areas of your life or goals you want to achieve. Use language that resonates with you and feels authentic.</p> <p><b>Keep Them Positive and Present Tense:</b> Frame affirmations in a positive light and use present tense language to reinforce your beliefs and intentions. For example “Every day I find happiness and comfort, even in the littlest things”, “I handle challenges with grace and wisdom” and “I am grateful for the abundance that I have and the abundance on its way”.</p>	<p><b>Morning Ritual:</b> Start your day by reciting affirmations while looking at yourself in the mirror. This primes your mindset for positivity and sets the tone for the day ahead.</p> <p><b>Visualization Exercises:</b> Combine affirmations with visualization techniques to enhance their effectiveness. Imagine yourself achieving your goals while repeating affirmations aloud or silently.</p>	<p><b>Increased Confidence:</b> Affirmations boost self-confidence and self-esteem by reinforcing positive beliefs about yourself and your abilities.</p> <p><b>Motivation and Resilience:</b> Regularly affirming your goals and aspirations keeps them at the forefront of your mind, motivating you to take action and persist in the face of challenges.</p> <p><b>Shift in Mindset:</b> Over time, positive affirmations can reprogram negative thought patterns and cultivate a more optimistic outlook on life.</p>

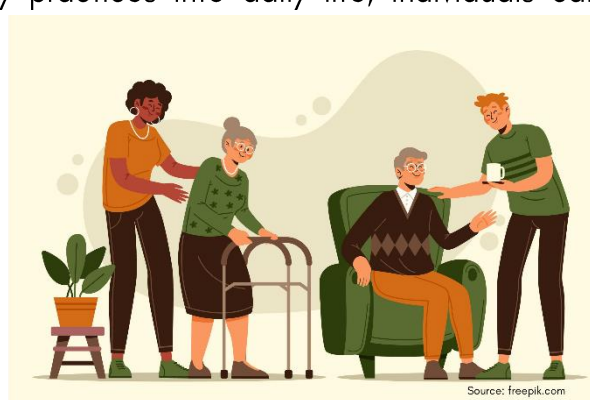


Source: freepik.com

## Strength-based activities

Identifying Strengths	Leveraging Strengths	Benefits
<p><b>Self-Reflection:</b> Take time to reflect on past experiences and identify moments when you felt most fulfilled and engaged. What strengths were you using during those times?</p> <p><b>Assessment Tools:</b> Utilize strengths assessment tools like the <a href="#">VIA Character Strengths Survey</a> or <a href="#">StrengthsFinder</a> to gain insight into your core strengths and virtues.</p>	<p><b>Alignment with Values:</b> Choose activities that align with your values and strengths, as this leads to a greater sense of fulfilment and purpose.</p> <p><b>Continuous Growth:</b> Challenge yourself to further develop and refine your strengths through ongoing practice and learning experiences.</p>	<p><b>Enhanced Performance:</b> Leveraging strengths allows you to excel in tasks and activities that come naturally to you, leading to increased success and satisfaction.</p> <p><b>Greater Resilience:</b> Utilizing strengths fosters a sense of confidence and competence, enabling you to navigate challenges more effectively and bounce back from setbacks.</p> <p><b>Improved Well-Being:</b> Engaging in activities that leverage your strengths promotes a sense of authenticity and fulfilment, contributing to overall well-being and life satisfaction.</p>

By incorporating these Positive Psychology practices into daily life, individuals can enhance their emotional well-being, reduce stress, and foster a more positive and fulfilling life.



## Section 4: Tips for caregivers

As a caregiver for the elderly, incorporating Positive Psychology practices into your caregiving approach can significantly enhance the well-being and quality of life for both you and the individuals you care for. This section provides detailed tips and strategies for caregivers to encourage Positive Psychology practices in elderly care.



### o Encouraging Positive Psychology Practices in Elderly Care

#### Model Positive Behaviors and Practices:

- **Lead by example:** As a caregiver, your attitude and behavior set the tone for the caregiving environment. Demonstrating positivity, resilience, and gratitude in your interactions with elderly individuals can inspire them to adopt similar attitudes
- **Share personal experiences:** Practice gratitude, mindfulness, and other Positive Psychology techniques in your own life, and share your experiences with those you care for. Share how mindfulness or gratitude has positively impacted your life. Personal anecdotes can serve as powerful motivators for elderly individuals to engage in these practices.

### o Providing Resources and Tools

- **Gratitude Journals:** Offer elderly individuals dedicated gratitude journals where they can jot down things they are thankful for each day. Encourage them to reflect on simple pleasures, cherished memories, or acts of kindness they have experienced.
- **Guided Meditation Apps:** Introduce them to user-friendly guided meditation apps that offer a variety of mindfulness exercises tailored to different needs and preferences. Assist them in navigating the apps and selecting sessions that resonate with them.
- **Provide information** on local community groups or activities that promote social connection and engagement.

### o Building a Supportive Environment

#### Foster Open Communication and Active Listening:

**Create Safe Spaces:** Establish an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and support, where elderly individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, emotions, needs, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment.

**Practice Empathetic Listening:** Practice active listening by fully engaging with what they are saying, validating their feelings, and responding with empathy and

understanding. Give full attention, maintain eye contact, and respond empathetically to their concerns and experiences, reflecting back what they share to demonstrate that you are truly listening and empathizing.

**Spend Quality Time:** Make an effort to spend quality time with your elderly loved ones. Engage in meaningful conversations and activities that strengthen your bond and provide emotional support.

- **Encouraging Participation in Social and Community Activities**
- **Identify Social Opportunities:** Explore local community centers, senior clubs, or volunteer organizations, where elderly individuals can engage in social activities, pursue hobbies, or contribute to the community, promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- **Provide Transportation Support:** Offer transportation assistance or accompany them to social events if needed, ensuring they have access to opportunities for social connection and engagement.

- **Practical Tips for Integrating Positive Psychology into Daily Care Routines**

#### Schedule Regular Mindfulness or Meditation Sessions:

**Establish Routine Times:** Set aside dedicated times each day for mindfulness or meditation sessions, such as in the morning before breakfast or in the evening before bedtime. Consistency is key to establishing a regular practice.

**Create a Calm Environment:** Create a serene and peaceful environment for meditation sessions by minimizing distractions, dimming lights, and playing soothing background music if desired.

#### Share and Celebrate Daily Gratitudes Together:

**Morning Reflections:** Start the day by inviting elderly individuals to share something they are grateful for during breakfast or morning routines. Encourage them to reflect on positive experiences or blessings from the previous day.

**Gratitude Rituals:** Create rituals around gratitude, such as keeping a gratitude jar where they can write down daily gratitudes on slips of paper and read them aloud together at the end of the week. Create a supportive environment where they can express appreciation for small joys and meaningful experiences.



- **Setting Achievable Goals and Celebrate Progress**

**Collaborative Goal Setting:** Work together with elderly individuals to identify realistic and achievable goals that align with their interests, capabilities and aspirations. Break down larger goals into smaller, manageable steps.

**Acknowledge Milestones:** Celebrate milestones, progress and achievements along the way, whether it's completing a goal, overcoming a challenge, or trying something new. Offer praise, encouragement, and recognition for their efforts and progress. This reinforces a sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy.

## Conclusion

By incorporating these tips and strategies into your caregiving routine, you can create a nurturing and empowering environment that promotes the well-being and happiness of elderly individuals fostering both positivity and resilience. Encouraging Positive Psychology practices not only enhances your quality of life but also fosters a deeper sense of connection, enriching experience and fulfilment in your daily life and in your role as a caregiver.

Implementing techniques such as gratitude journaling, mindfulness meditation, and positive affirmations can significantly improve emotional and mental well-being. Creating safe spaces for open communication and practicing empathetic listening helps build trust and understanding, allowing elderly individuals to feel valued and heard. Engaging in stress-reducing activities and physical exercises supports physical health and emotional stability.

Additionally, by spending quality time with your elderly loved ones, you strengthen your bond and provide essential emotional support. This connection not only benefits them but also brings a sense of purpose and joy to the caregiving role.

There are many inspiring examples of elderly individuals who have embraced their age and found ways to enjoy the journey. Their stories highlight the potential for growth, fulfilment, and happiness at every stage of life.

Overall, these Positive Psychology practices contribute to a holistic approach, where both the caregiver and the elderly individual thrive.

## Quiz

1. What is a key benefit of gratitude journaling for the elderly?

- A) Improved physical health
- B) Increased social connections
- C) Enhanced cognitive abilities

2. Which practice is most associated with reducing anxiety in the elderly?

- A) Goal setting
- B) Strength-based activities
- C) Mindfulness meditation

3. What is the primary focus of positive affirmations?

- A) Enhancing physical strength
- B) Boosting resilience and optimism
- C) Improving memory

\*Correct answers: 1- B, 2-C, 3-B

*I am strong*

*I am capable*

*I am resilient*

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## Module 4: Best practices from other countries who have good social welfare systems

### Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), average life expectancy worldwide has risen sharply over the past twenty years, suggesting that quality of care is also on the rise. Therefore, it is important to notify that all countries have different welfare systems. To evaluate the different systems around the world, there are a few different evaluation methods. We will go through some welfare systems from EU countries on one hand and non-European countries on another hand, to analyze them and to compare them, as to analyze the success factors and how they can be adapted to other contexts, and possibly other countries.

### Section 1: Overview of social welfare systems in various countries

#### Welfare systems in European countries

- The Dutch welfare state

The Netherlands has one of the most comprehensive social security systems in Europe, but the eligibility rules can appear complicated at first. The Dutch social security system has two strands. The first, national insurance (volksverzekeringen), covers social benefits and is administered by the Social Insurance Bank (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, or SVB). Meanwhile, employee insurance (werknemersverzekeringen) provides benefits relating to work. The Employee Insurance Agency (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen, or UWV) oversees this. If you live and work in the Netherlands, you'll need to take out a health insurance plan (Zorgverzekeringswet or ZVW) to cover healthcare costs. This is in addition to the standard coverage provided under the long-term care act (Wet Langdurige Zorg, WLZ). The WLZ is funded by social security contributions. It supports people with severe, long-term care needs, such as those with disabilities or chronic illness.

- The Swedish welfare state

Sweden is classified as a Social Democratic welfare state. The state organises social insurance, which is financed through taxation. Since the 1960s, the Swedish social security system has combined universalism, with social rights and income benefits available to all inhabitants with selective access to some benefits and services based on social, medical or other conditions.



- The Norwegian welfare state

Like Sweden, the Norwegian welfare state is classified as a Social Democratic welfare state because benefits and services are largely provided by the state and are largely financed through taxes and through compulsory membership of the national social insurance scheme. Its oil industry and government petroleum fund has largely allowed Norway to escape the austerity measures seen elsewhere since 2008. The Norwegian welfare state is universal, though access to certain benefits and services are connected to specific social or medical eligibility criteria so that municipal professionals and officials have a powerful role as gatekeepers (Kuhnle and Kildal, 2005). Frame laws govern welfare benefits and services normalise entitlement as there are few laws regulating specific groups.

### Welfare systems in non-European countries

- The Japanese welfare state

Japan's welfare state has a non-typical conservative regime. Similar to other conservative countries, Japan has an occupational segmented social insurance system. Pre-war Japan once adopted a German-style social policy. Japan also borrowed ideas of pensions and health from the German system. In addition, Japan's welfare state embodies familialism, whereby families rather than the government will provide the social safety net. However, a drawback of a welfare state with familialism is its lack of childcare social policy.

- The Singapore welfare state

“While Singapore is not generally regarded as a welfare state, the provision of housing welfare on a large scale has been a defining feature of its welfare system. The extensive housing system has played a useful role in raising savings and homeownership rates as well as contributing to sustained economic growth in general and development of the housing sector in particular. Few would dispute the description of Singapore’s housing policies as ‘phenomenally successful’ (Ramesh, 2003). Singapore’s economic growth record in the past four decades has brought it from third world to first world status, with homeownership widespread at more than 90 percent for the resident population.”

- The Australian welfare state

Social security, in Australia, refers to a system of social welfare payments provided by the Australian Government to eligible Australian citizens, permanent residents, and

limited international visitors. These payments are almost always administered by Centrelink, a program of Services Australia. In Australia, most payments are means tested.

The system includes payments to retirees, job seekers, parents (especially new and single parents), people with disabilities and their caregivers, guardians of orphans, students and apprentices, and people who have no way of supporting themselves.

Medicare is Australia's publicly funded universal health care insurance scheme. Initially created in 1975 by the Whitlam Labor government under the name "Medibank". The Fraser Liberal government made significant changes to it from 1976 leading to its abolition in late 1981. The Hawke government reinstated universal health care in 1984 under the name "Medicare".

- **The Canadian welfare state**

Canada's welfare programs (see Bibliography) are funded and administered at all levels of government (with 13 different provincial/territorial systems), and include health and medical care, public education (through graduate school), social housing and social services. Social support is given through programs including Social Assistance, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Child Tax Benefit, Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, and the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans.

Most Canadian seniors are eligible for Old Age Security, a taxable monthly social security payment. In addition, most former workers can receive Canada Pension Plan or Quebec Pension Plan based on their contributions during their careers. As well, many people have a private pension through their employer, although that is becoming less common, and many people take advantage of a government tax-shelter for investments called a Registered Retirement Savings Plan or may save money privately.

- **The American welfare state**

By 2013, the U.S. remained the only major industrial state without a uniform national sickness program. American spending on health care (as a percent of GDP) is the highest in the world, but it is a complex mix of federal, state, philanthropic, employer and individual funding.

## Section 2: Case studies of effective policies and programs supporting the Elderly

- **Netherlands – Buurtzorg Model:** This model emphasises community-based care and self-management for elderly individuals. It involves small, self-organising teams of nurses who provide holistic care to clients in their homes. This approach promotes independence, social engagement, and personalised support for elderly individuals, fostering positive ageing outcomes. Videos explaining this model are available [here](#).
- **Sweden – Senior Centers and Day Care Centers:** These centres offer a wide range of activities, services, and social opportunities for older adults. They provide a supportive environment where seniors can participate in recreational activities, educational programs, and social events, helping to prevent social isolation and promote active ageing.
- **Denmark – Age-Friendly Cities and Communities:** The concept of age-friendly cities and communities, involves creating environments that enable older adults to live independently, participate in community life, and access the support services they need. This includes initiatives such as accessible public transportation, age-friendly housing options, and community engagement programs tailored to seniors' interests and needs. The example of the city of Esjberg is available [here](#).
- **United Kingdom – Age UK's "Men in Sheds" Program:** Originated in the UK but spread to other countries, this programme provides older men with opportunities to socialise, learn new skills, and engage in meaningful activities within a workshop setting. Participants work on woodworking projects, share knowledge and experiences, and develop friendships, contributing to positive mental health and well-being in later life. This [video](#) presents the initiative in Cheshire.
- **Austria – [Federal Plan for Older Persons](#):** It was developed with the participation of representatives of older people, which forms the basis of the country's approach to older people. The plan includes, among other things, awareness-raising and other measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of age, including multiple discrimination against women.

- **Greece – "Schools for Parents" programme of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning:** more than 5,000 participants have attended 295 courses on the subject of old age to learn about the physical and psychological problems faced by older people and the means available to prevent or compensate for them.
- **Norway – "[More years-More Opportunities](#)":** Norway has adopted this strategy which aims to accommodate the ageing population and unlock opportunities in the areas of transport, community planning, inclusive working life, and the integration of technology. The mechanisms adopted for active ageing are the following: a) further increasing the employment rates of older people (over 65), b) greater emphasis on career development and career mobility (after 50), c) achieving a coherent working life, d) knowledge-based information, e) building appropriate attitudes regarding older workers, f) preventing early leave from the workforce due to reduced health and social security benefits, g) reviewing upper working age limits in consultation with social partners, h) reducing differences between occupational pension systems in private and public sector, i) developing a new strategy for employment policy in the public sector, and j) improving the health and care sector as a good workplace for older workers (UNECE Working Group on Ageing, 2016; Mentis et al., 2023).
- **Ireland – Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative:** One good practice example from Ireland exemplifying positive ageing initiatives is [the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative \(HaPAI\)](#). This collaborative effort involves the HSE Health and Wellbeing Division, the Department of Health, the Atlantic Philanthropies, and Age Friendly Ireland. Under the HaPAI's Research Strategy 2015-2019, research partnerships are fostered to inform policy responses to population ageing. An exemplary project funded through this initiative is the 'Move For Life' study, which aims to increase physical activity levels in adults over 50. Additionally, the HaPAI supports research projects addressing dementia assessment, health inequalities, and palliative care for older individuals, aligning with the objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

- **Poland – Program Wieloletni na rzecz Osób Starszych AKTYWNI+:** One programme from Poland called "[ACTIVE+ Multi-Annual Programme for Older Persons 2021-2025](#)" is addressing the challenges of an ageing population. This initiative provides significant state funding, aiming to enhance seniors' quality of life through various support services and facilities. The successful implementation of predecessor programmes has already improved seniors' well-being. However, since evaluations highlighted the ongoing need for further initiatives and increased funding, the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy has developed the AKTYWNI + programme (2021-2025).
- **Switzerland – Gesund Altern:** One good practice example from Switzerland is the initiative of "[Healthy Ageing and Participation](#)" in terms of involving and empowering older people. Developed collaboratively with engaged seniors and professionals, it highlights that healthy ageing encompasses various aspects. By including seniors according to their interests and capabilities, successful projects can emerge, fostering a comprehensive approach to ageing well. The initiative aims to strengthen and optimise health promotion and prevention with older people in Switzerland, targeting professionals, policymakers, and interested seniors to provide insights and inspiration for their work.
- **Japan – Community-Based Integrated Care System:** This system aims to support ageing in place and promote social participation among seniors. It integrates medical care, long-term care, and community services, with a focus on preventive care, rehabilitation, and fostering social connections through community activities and support networks. [Here](#) is a video explaining this care system.
- **Singapore – Active Ageing Programmes:** Singapore's government has implemented various active ageing programs aimed at promoting physical, mental, and social well-being among older adults. These programs include subsidised fitness classes, lifelong learning opportunities, volunteerism initiatives, and intergenerational activities that encourage seniors to stay active, engaged, and connected with their communities.

- **Australia - Home Care Packages Program:** This programme provides older adults with personalised support services tailored to their individual needs and preferences. This includes assistance with daily activities, healthcare services, social support, and home modifications to promote ageing in place and enhance the quality of life for seniors. [Here](#) is a video explaining this specific program.
- **Canada - Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs):** In these communities, older adults are placed within their own neighbourhoods or housing complexes. Supportive networks and informal caregiving arrangements among residents are usually developed, fostering social connections, mutual assistance, and a sense of belonging among seniors. [Here](#) is a video explaining this system.
- **USA: National Institute of Ageing (2022)** suggests concrete tips for healthy ageing: taking care of physical, mental and cognitive health. The action plan includes tips for exercise, healthy eating, and quality sleep habits, warns about smoking, alcohol and other substances, and encourages regular medical check-ups. In the area of mental health there are recommendations combating social isolation and loneliness, managing stress and other difficult moods and emotions, encouraging seniors to find hobbies and leisure activities. [Here](#) is more information on the institute.

### Section 3: Comparative analysis of different social welfare approaches

#### Comparison between Sweden and Norway

Sweden in common with Norway demonstrates a Scandinavian model of public provision of social care, which is mostly administered by the municipalities, whilst the county provides specialized support. There is primarily a dual system of care provided by the municipality and the market. A new public management structure has seen the involvement of private enterprise in the provision of services in areas of schooling, health and disability care. The privatization of social care provision since 1990 has resulted in significant increase in private care providers.

#### Comparison between the United States and Australia

According to the Commonwealth Fund (a private U.S foundation whose stated purpose is to "promote a high-performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable) one

of the top-performing countries overall is Australia, for which we will discover that they have a program supporting the elderly.

The United States ranks last on access to care, administrative efficiency, equity, and health care outcomes, but second on measures of care process.

Some features distinguish top-performing countries from the United States, which we will address next, while talking about the success factors we find in some countries and how they could possibly be adapted to other contexts.

#### Section 4: Success factors and how they can be adapted to other contexts

Among the success factors we find in the countries studied here, we could for example cite the housing welfare in Singapore, considered as a large success factor in the country.

Generally, countries such as Singapore, Japan, Australia and Canada:

- Provide for universal coverage and remove cost barriers;
- Invest in primary care systems to ensure that high-value services are equitably available in all communities to all people;
- Reduce administrative burdens that divert time, efforts, and spending from health improvement efforts; and
- Invest in social services, especially for children, working-age adults and the elderly.

#### Conclusion

International comparisons allow the public, policymakers, and health care leaders to see alternative approaches to delivering health care, ones that might be borrowed to build better health systems that yield better health outcomes.

Therefore, the situation in non-European countries varies significantly due to differences in economic development, political systems, cultural contexts, and levels of social expenditure. Here are some general observations about welfare states and public expenditure in various regions outside of Europe:

In North America, particularly the United States and Canada, the approach to welfare differs markedly. The U.S. has a relatively limited welfare state with lower levels of public

expenditure on social services compared to European countries. The focus is more on market-driven solutions and private provision of services such as healthcare and pensions. Canada, on the other hand, has a more extensive welfare state, with public healthcare and more generous social security benefits, though still less comprehensive than many European countries.

Asian countries also exhibit a wide range of welfare state models. Japan and Singapore have relatively well-developed social welfare systems, including public healthcare, pensions, and unemployment insurance, which are supported by strong institutional frameworks. Rapid economic growth in some parts of Asia has led to increased social spending, but challenges remain in ensuring equitable access and quality of services.

Australia has a well-established welfare state with comprehensive public healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits. This country has high levels of public expenditure on social services and relatively reliable government institutions, resulting in efficient delivery of welfare services. The focus here is often on maintaining and improving the quality and sustainability of these services.

In summary, non-European countries exhibit a wide range of approaches to welfare states and public expenditure. Findings show that the effectiveness of social spending is closely tied to the reliability and transparency of government institutions, as well as the socio-economic and political context of each country. Improving governance, reducing corruption, and fostering trust and pro-social behavior among citizens are common challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the efficiency and impact of welfare programs globally.



Source: freepik.com



## Quiz

1. **What is the specificity of a social democratic welfare state?**

- A) It's achieved with partial public ownership, economic interventionism, and policies promoting social equality
- B) It is based on public taxations enabling the development of public policies in the fields of health and education
- C) It is financed largely by private funds to benefit directly to citizens and give them access to essential health services

2. **What was the particularity of the Irish Healthy and Positive Ageing initiative?**

- A) It is a collaborative work between seniors and health professionals
- B) It is a collaborative effort between different division of wellbeing and health areas
- C) It's an initiative based on the combined effort between government and private entities

3. **What is the concept of "age-friendly cities and communities" developed in Denmark?**

- A) The community is dedicated to a specific target group aged over 60 years old in which they live in group and the community proposes social services and medical assistance

\*Correct answer: 1-B, 2-B, 3-C



Source: freepik.com

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Source: freepik.com

## Module 5: Practical tips for well-being and resilience in the elderly and caregivers

### Section 1: Introduction: Importance of self-care for seniors

This section of the module is designed to provide senior citizens aged 65 and above with simple actions and practical advice to promote their wellbeing and resilience. It consists of five key actions, each accompanied by exercises and a quiz to reinforce the learning. By the end of the module, you will have a better understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, manage stress, and build strong social connections, ultimately enhancing your overall wellbeing and resilience.

The module will also provide a comprehensive resource guide to support you with contact information for local organizations, support groups, and health professionals. You are also encouraged to fill in a personalized wellbeing plan template to help you set goals, track progress, and make adjustments as needed.

**WELLBEING PLAN TEMPLATE:** <https://www.carepatron.com/files/wellness-plan.pdf>

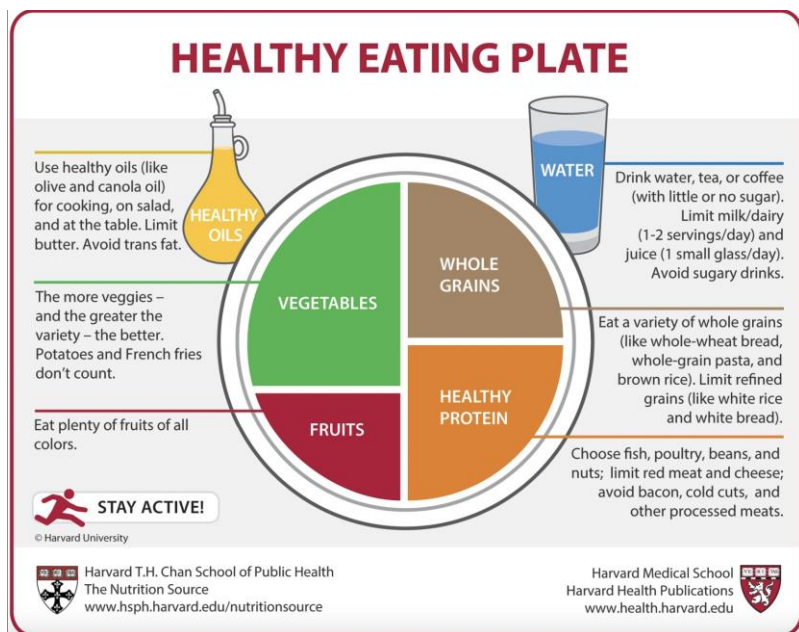
#### 1. Maintain a Balanced Diet

**Benefits:** A balanced diet is crucial for maintaining overall health and preventing age-related diseases.

**Materials:** Access to the internet, flipchart & post-it notes (optional)

**Suggested time duration:** 60 minutes

**Activity:** Read about how to prepare a healthy meal. Discuss with your health professional who might give more specific recommendations based on your needs and health condition. You might use the concept of a “Healthy Plate” prepared by skilled researchers and nutritionists.



**TIP:** Organise a workshop in your community center and invite a registered dietitian/nutritionist who will guide you through the process of creating a balanced meal plan.

## 2. Engage in Regular Physical Activity

**Benefits:** Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining physical and mental health in older adults.

**Equipment/materials:** safe quiet space indoor or outdoor, comfortable clothes, exercise mat, resistance bands

**Suggested time duration:** 30 minutes

**Activity:** Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily, such as walking, swimming, or yoga.

### Example of Exercise Routine

1. Warm-Up: Gentle stretching (5 minutes).
2. Cardio: Brisk walking or marching in place (10 minutes).
3. Strength: Chair squats, bicep curls with light weights (10 minutes).
4. Balance: Standing on one leg, heel-to-toe walk (10 minutes).
5. Cool-Down: Deep breathing and stretching (5 minutes).



**TIP:** adjust the physical activity to your current physical condition. Listen to your body and don't workout over intense sensations of pain.

Source: [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

Explore short videos here

#### Gym/fitness for seniors

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NemLjfqy24>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIBsNXH4GW8>

#### Yoga for seniors

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ts01MC2mlo&t=3s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZvmKOPoFVo>

### 3. Meditation and gratitude

**Benefits:** Deep breathing, body scans and guided meditations support mental and emotional health and positive attitude.

**Equipment/materials:** Comfortable seating, audio for guided meditation.

**Suggested time duration:** 10 minutes daily

#### Activity 1: Practice Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation can help reduce stress, improve focus, and promote a sense of calm and wellbeing. Simple exercises like deep breathing, body scans, and guided meditations can be easily incorporated into daily routines. Set aside 5–10 minutes each day for a mindfulness practice. Find a quiet and comfortable space, and focus on your breath or a calming mantra.



Source: canva.com

#### Activity 2: Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude

Expressing gratitude has been shown to improve overall wellbeing and life satisfaction. Make a conscious effort to appreciate the small joys and blessings in your life. Start a gratitude journal and write down three things you are grateful for each day. Reflect on the positive aspects of your life and the people who bring you joy.

You can follow the instructions in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6rXVM8VIWc&t=1s>

### 4. Foster social connections

**Benefits:** Strong social connections are essential for emotional wellbeing and resilience.

#### Volunteer Work

Volunteer in your community, find an opportunity to contribute to a cause you care about while interacting with others. You may contact a representative from a local

volunteer organization and ask for information on available opportunities and guidance through the process of finding a suitable volunteer role.

### Social Events

Research local social events, such as community gatherings or cultural festivals, where you can meet new people and engage in social activities. Ask your community liaison to provide a calendar of upcoming events and offer tips on how to make the most of social interactions.

### Further tools and resources for continuous improvement of well-being

**Materials/Equipment:** Tablets or smartphones, internet access.

Explore various digital apps and websites. Here are a few examples:

- Apps: Calm, Headspace for meditation; MyFitnessPal for nutrition tracking.
- Websites: National Institute on Aging,
- Resources: Senior centers, community classes, support groups.

- <https://www.vscm.selfhelp.net/>

- <https://seniorplanet.org/>



Source: canva.com

## Section 2: Simple actions and practical tips to promote wellbeing and resilience in the caregivers

### Introduction: Importance of self-care for caregivers

A caregiver is a person who provides physical or psychological care to someone else. Caregivers help others who aren't able to help themselves fully on their own including helping elderly. Taking care of an elderly person, whether you are an informal or professional caregiver can be rewarding, but also very tiring.

**Informal caregivers** are individuals voluntarily caring for a relative or a friend. Across the literature and in the media, it is widely accepted that being an informal caregiver puts a person at risk of poorer mental and physical health and puts the individual under stress. **Formal/professional caregivers** for elderly are also at high risk of mental, emotional, physical and professional exhaustion.



Source: canva.com

Stressed caregivers may experience fatigue, anxiety and depression. You can reduce your risk of exhaustion or even burnout by introducing regular activities supporting your wellbeing and building resilience. Simply put: **“One cannot pour from an empty cup”**.

Below you will find a few tips and activities that you can incorporate into your daily or weekly schedule. Try them, observe how they make you feel. Choose which ones work for you and try to practice them regularly.

SELF-CARE TIPS		
REGULARITY	REALISTIC	INTERCONNECTED
Building resilience is like building a muscle. You need to practice regularly to see the impact on your wellbeing and life.	Set realistic goals and expectations. Start with small steps, a few minutes every day.	Physical, mental and emotional pillars of wellbeing are interconnected. Stretching the body in the fresh air will positively affect your body, mind and mood.



## 1. Brisk walk in the fresh air

**Benefits:** physical, mental, emotional health

**Equipment/materials:** safe space to walk outside (preferably in a green area), comfortable walking shoes

**Suggested time duration:** start with 10 min a day, extend to 20 – 30 min a day or 150 min a week spread among the days as your schedule allows.

Research has shown that walking at a brisk pace at least 150 minutes a week can help you:

- Think better, feel better and sleep better.
- Reduce your risk of serious diseases like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and several types of cancer.
- Improve your blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels.
- Increase your energy and stamina.
- Improve your mental and emotional wellbeing and reduce your risk of depression.
- Improve memory and reduce your risk of dementia.
- Boost bone strength and reduce your risk of osteoporosis.
- Prevent weight gain.

If 150 minutes sounds like a lot, remember that even short activity sessions can be added up over the week to reach this goal. Try to fit in a few minutes of walking several times a day. This could be 10 minutes of brisk walking after breakfast, lunch and dinner.



**TIP 1:** Find a walking buddy/friend, set walking sessions together and encourage each other.

**TIP 2:** Any other type of regular physical activity that brings you joy is also very beneficial for your overall wellbeing. Try cycling, swimming or dancing.

## 2. 10 min mindful stretch/yoga

**Benefits:** physical, mental, emotional health

**Equipment/materials:** safe quiet space indoor or outdoor, comfortable clothes, exercise mat or carpet (optional)

**Suggested time duration:** 10 min, 3 - 5 times a week

Regular physical activity helps you avoid or control chronic health issues, releases endorphins—hormones that improve mood, boost energy, and promote better sleep.

Try to perform this activity like a form of meditation. Focus on your movements and your breathing. Observe the sensations that arise in the body as you stretch. Regulate and adjust the movements to your momentary physical and mental state. It's OK to feel the body when stretching, some discomfort is healthy. But don't push over intense sensations like burning or pinching pain or if you realize your breath doesn't flow freely. Mindful stretching practices help you live in the present moment.

Here are a few suggested standing stretches you can do anywhere. You can also explore short yoga videos below.



Picture Resource: canva.com

Explore short yoga videos here

**10 Minute Stretching – FULL BODY –Stress Relief & Recovery**

<https://youtu.be/hNCqIgl7Pjc?si=ijT7jLe3gHPZkeLh>

## 10 min Full Body Stretch 1

[https://youtu.be/EvF\\_Jnf9jwg?si=JHVMDmlrQf8QL4fo](https://youtu.be/EvF_Jnf9jwg?si=JHVMDmlrQf8QL4fo)

## 10 Minute Full Body Stretch 2

<https://youtu.be/lxuTCHJSers?si=0DQ7xPmrAuXMIEVl>

### 3. Relaxation breathing: five finger breath (tracing fingers breath)

**Benefits:** physical, mental, emotional health

**Equipment/materials:** none, it can be performed anytime anywhere

**Suggested time duration:** 2 – 4 min, one or multiple times a day

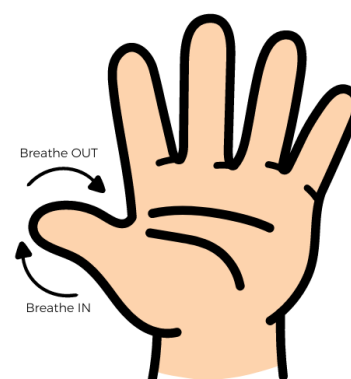
Daily deep breathing exercise can lower resting blood pressure and reduce stress and anxiety. The advantage is that it can be performed virtually anywhere without any equipment required. Scientists also found that **longer exhalation** than inhalation stimulates the part of the nervous system that counter fights the stress response and calms the body and mind.

Note: With breathing exercises it's normal if you feel a bit dizzy especially in the beginning. With regular exercise your body and mind will adjust. However if feelings of dizziness or other discomfort continue, stop the exercise, possibly adjust the length and intensity of breathing or move to another activity.

#### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Start by standing or sitting tall with feet planted on the ground or crossed at the ankles (whichever feels most comfortable). Take a few deep breaths through your nose and then exhale out through your mouth.

**Step 2:** Once you're settled into the rhythm of your breath, use your index finger to trace the outline of each finger on the opposite hand. On the in-breath, trace up the outside of your left thumb with your right index finger. On the out-breath, trace down the other side. The goal is to match the movement with your breath.



Source: canva.com

**Step 3:** Keep tracing until you reach your pinky finger before starting over again with your pointer finger; then repeat several times until you feel settled into a relaxed state. Notice how you feel afterwards.

You can follow the instructions in this video:

<https://youtu.be/03q1HD-MGoo?si=gfLgJk0hpZ9lpn>

### Asking for help

Being a caregiver is a demanding job. If feelings of physical or mental exhaustion, troubles sleeping, sadness or anxiety prevail for several weeks, it might be a signal you need rest and help from others. It might be a good idea to make a list of people you can turn to for help. Start with a list of friends and family, find support groups in your area or online and add contacts to professionals like coaches, therapists and crisis intervention call centers. You don't need to do it alone. **It's OK to ask for help.**

Here are some links to organizations and support groups:

<https://www.agingcare.com/caregiver-forum>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/113354218750970/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CaregiversConnect/>



Source: freepik.com



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## Quiz

1. Which of the following is a sign of malnutrition in older adults?

- A) Unintentional weight loss
- B) Increased appetite
- C) Improved skin health

2. How much exercise is recommended daily for seniors?

- A) 10 minutes
- B) 20 minutes
- C) 30 minutes

3. Which pillar of wellbeing is positively affected by physical activity?

- A) Physical health
- B) Mental and emotional health
- C) Physical, mental and emotional health

4. What breathing pattern calms the body and mind?

- A) Longer exhalation, shorter inhalation
- B) Longer inhalation, shorter exhalation
- C) Short inhalation and exhalation

\*Correct answers: 1-A, 2-C, 3-C, 4-A



Source: [freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com)

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## Conclusion

As people age, they experience various physical, emotional and social changes that can impact their quality of life. The Positive Ageing toolkit has been designed to enhance the well-being and resilience of older adults providing useful information and positive psychology approaches and practices and case studies of real life individuals who have improved their lives by implementing these practices. These strategies and tips can help caregivers create a supportive environments that promote physical, emotional and mental health for the elderly. The toolkit also offers useful and practical tips for the care givers well-being and resilience in supporting older adults.

This resource is more than just a guide; it is an invitation to embrace a proactive and positive approach to ageing. Whether you are an older adult seeking to enhance your quality of life or a caregiver looking to improve your support skills, this toolkit is designed to meet your needs.

This toolkit will serve as a companion to your journey helping you embrace the opportunities, overcome the challenges and enjoy the experience of growing older with confidence and grace regardless of age.



## Consortium

### P1 E-Seniors-France



### P2 Institute of Development -Cyprus



### P3 Hellenic Association of Positive Psychology -Greece



### P4 Centre for Advancement of Research and Development- Cyprus



### P5 Semwell a Motion Digital- Czechia



### P6 European Association for the Education of Adults- Belgium



### P7 Insituto para el fomento del desarrollo y la formacion- Spain



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