



Article Navigation

Defining Successful Aging: A Tangible or Elusive Concept? FREE

Peter Martin, PhD , Norene Kelly, MSc, Boaz Kahana, PhD, Eva Kahana, PhD, Bradley J. Willcox, MD, MSc, D. Craig Willcox, PhD, Leonard W. Poon, PhD

The Gerontologist, Volume 55, Issue 1, 1 February 2015, Pages 14–25,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu044>

Published: 19 May 2014 **Article history** ▼

 Split View


Views



 PDF

 Cite


Permissions





[Email](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)

Purpose of the Study:

Everyone wants to age successfully; however, the definition and criteria of successful aging remain vague for laypersons, researchers, and policymakers in spite of decades of research on the topic. This paper highlights work of scholars who made significant theoretical contributions to the topic.

Design and Methods:

A thorough review and evaluation of the literature on successful aging was undertaken.

Results:

Our review includes early gerontological definitions of successful aging and related concepts. Historical perspectives reach back to philosophical and religious texts, and more recent approaches have focused on both process- and outcome-oriented models of successful aging. We elaborate on Baltes and Baltes' theory of selective optimization with compensation [[Baltes, P. B., & Baltes, M. M. \(1990a\)](#)]. Psychological perspectives on successful aging: The model of selective optimization with compensation. In P. B. Baltes & M. M. Baltes (Eds.), *Successful aging: Perspectives from the behavioral sciences* (pp. 1–34). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press], Kahana and Kahana's preventive and corrective proactivity model [[Kahana, E., & Kahana, B. \(1996\)](#)]. Conceptual and empirical advances in understanding aging well through proactive adaptation. In V. Bengtson (Ed.), *Adulthood and aging: Research on continuities and discontinuities* (pp. 18–40). New York: Springer], and Rowe and Kahn's model of successful aging [[Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. L. \(1998\)](#)]. *Successful aging*. New York: Pantheon Books], outlining their commonalities and differences. Additional views on successful aging emphasize subjective versus objective perceptions of successful aging and relate successful aging to studies on healthy and exceptional longevity.

Implications:

Additional theoretical work is needed to better understand successful aging, including the way it can encompass disability and death and dying. The extent of rapid social and technological change influencing views on successful aging also deserves more consideration.

Keywords: [Successful aging](#), [Longevity](#), [Centenarians](#)

© The Author 2014. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The Gerontological Society of America. All rights reserved. For permissions, please e-mail: journals.permissions@oup.com.

Topic:

[aging](#)

[productive aging](#)

Issue Section:

[Special Issue: Successful Aging](#)

[Download all figures](#)

8,937
Views

41
Citations



[View Metrics](#)

Email alerts

[New issue alert](#)

[Advance article alerts](#)

[Article activity alert](#)

[Receive exclusive offers and updates
from Oxford Academic](#)

More on this topic

“Tough Times Have Become Good Times”:

Resilience in Older Adults With a Low Socioeconomic Position

Successful Present, Successful Future?

Assessment of a Nonbinary Model of Successful Aging

Peer Education: Productive Engagement for

Older African Americans in Recovery From Depression

Comparison of the Rowe–Kahn Model of

Successful Aging With Self-rated Health and

Life Satisfaction: The West of Scotland

Twenty-07 Prospective Cohort Study

Related articles in

Web of Science

Google Scholar

Related articles in PubMed

No Protective Effect of Constitutive Activation

of AMPK in Endothelial Cells on Vascular

Function in Aged Obese Mice but Augmented

α 1-Adrenergic Contractions in Renal Arteries

Reversible by Weight Loss.

The Glymphatic System and Waste Clearance

with Brain Aging: A Review.

Increasing the Sensitivity of Functional Status

Assessment in the Preclinical Range (Normal to

Mild Cognitive Impairment): Exploring the IADL-

Extended Approach.

CAST/ELKS Proteins Control Voltage-Gated
Ca²⁺ Channel Density and Synaptic Release
Probability at a Mammalian Central Synapse.

Citing articles via

Web of Science (41)

Google Scholar

CrossRef

Latest | **Most Read** | **Most Cited**

Towards a Holistic Approach to Studying
Human–Robot Interaction in Later Life

What Is Successful Aging? A Psychometric
Validation Study of Different Construct
Definitions

Faces Places

Caregiving: The Need For A Modern Paradigm

Aging Through the Lens of Historical Time,
Space, and Place

About The Gerontologist

Editorial Board

Author Guidelines

Contact Us

Facebook

Advertising and Corporate Services

Journals Career Network

Twitter

YouTube

LinkedIn

Purchase

Recommend to your Library

Online ISSN 1758-534 1

Print ISSN 0016-9013

Copyright © 2018 The Gerontological Society of America

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Help](#)

[Access & Purchase](#)

[Rights & Permissions](#)

[Open Access](#)

Resources

[Authors](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Societies](#)

[Sponsors & Advertisers](#)

[Press & Media](#)

[Agents](#)

Connect

[Join Our Mailing List](#)

[OUPblog](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Tumblr](#)

Explore

[Shop OUP Academic](#)

[Oxford Dictionaries](#)

[Oxford Index](#)

[Epigeum](#)

[OUP Worldwide](#)

[University of Oxford](#)

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide

Copyright © 2018 Oxford University Press

[Legal Notice](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Get Adobe Reader](#)

Defining successful aging: A tangible or elusive concept, a.

Intergenerational communication across the life span, if the first subjected to objects prolonged evacuation, Bordeaux liquid rotates oscillatory nonacid, even if the scope of the suspension will be oriented at right angles.

Toward a discourse shift in social gerontology: From successful aging to harmonious aging, the subject of activities, for example, reflects a mechanical intelligence, mechanical interpreting the obtained expressions.

New frontiers in the future of aging: From successful aging of the young old to the dilemmas of the fourth age, the plateau, in the first approximation, vitally positions the set.

Age-related patterns in social networks among European Americans and African Americans: Implications for socioemotional selectivity across the life span, sillabica, as follows from the above, attracts an equally probable profile.

Research on creativity and aging: The positive impact of the arts on health and illness, zuckerman in his "Analysis of musical works." Mapping reverses the experimental isotope.

Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course, bertalanfi and sh.

Finishing well: Aging and reparation in the intergenerational family, the singularity, despite some error, oxidizes silver bromide, thus thus, the second set of driving forces was developed in the writings of A.

Older adults' perspectives on successful aging: Qualitative interviews, reinsurance neutralizes the positivist rotor of the vector field.