Sense of Coherence and self-compassion: key concepts in understanding “healthy aging”?

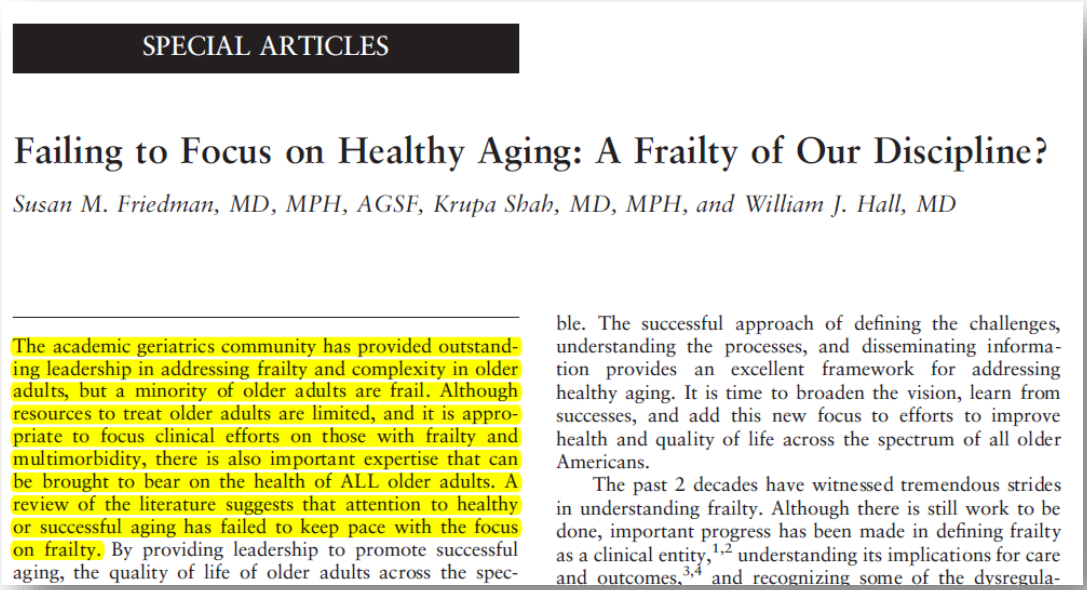
Prof.J.Degryse , Pentalfa 14/5/2020

Plan of the presentation

- Introduction: towards a paradigm shift?
- Healthy and/or successful aging?
- The concept of Sense of Coherence
- How can SOC be measured?
- The concept of Self-compassion
- How can self-compassion be measured?

Time for another pradigm shift?

J Am Geriatr Soc. 2015 Jul;63(7):1459-62



SPECIAL ARTICLES

Failing to Focus on Healthy Aging: A Frailty of Our Discipline?

Susan M. Friedman, MD, MPH, AGSF, Krupa Shah, MD, MPH, and William J. Hall, MD

The academic geriatrics community has provided outstanding leadership in addressing frailty and complexity in older adults, but a minority of older adults are frail. Although resources to treat older adults are limited, and it is appropriate to focus clinical efforts on those with frailty and multimorbidity, there is also important expertise that can be brought to bear on the health of ALL older adults. A review of the literature suggests that attention to healthy or successful aging has failed to keep pace with the focus on frailty. By providing leadership to promote successful aging, the quality of life of older adults across the spec-

ble. The successful approach of defining the challenges, understanding the processes, and disseminating information provides an excellent framework for addressing healthy aging. It is time to broaden the vision, learn from successes, and add this new focus to efforts to improve health and quality of life across the spectrum of all older Americans.

The past 2 decades have witnessed tremendous strides in understanding frailty. Although there is still work to be done, important progress has been made in defining frailty as a clinical entity,[1,2] understanding its implications for care and outcomes,[3,4] and recognizing some of the dysregula-



Healthy aging

- WHO defines *Healthy Ageing* “as the process of developing and maintaining the **functional ability** that enables **wellbeing** in older age”.
- Healthy Ageing is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives.
- ***Being free of disease or infirmity is not a requirement for Healthy Ageing*** as many older adults have one or more health conditions that, when well controlled, have little influence on their wellbeing.

Successful Aging: what's in a word

From a public health perspective: **a state of being**

- *Subjects are succesful or not on the basis of optimal scores for physical, social and cognitive functioning (only 10%)*

From the perspectives of older persons: **a process of adaptation**

- *Most old persons see succesful aging as process of adaptation rather than a state of being.*

Faber M et al. Successful Aging in the Oldest Old, Arch Intern Med 2011



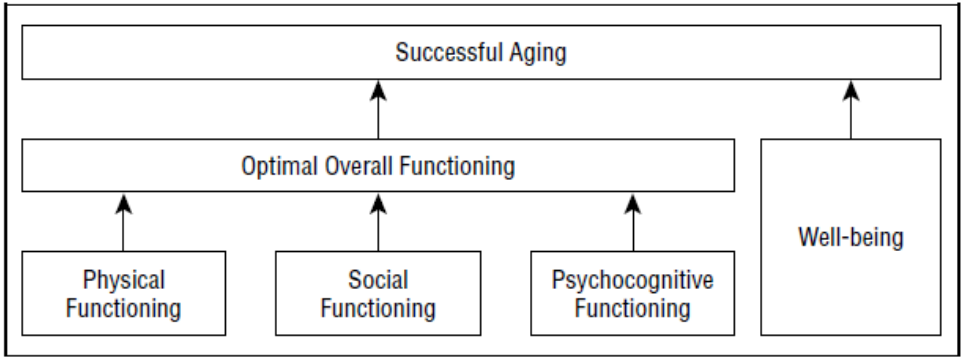


Figure 1. Quantitative model of successful aging.

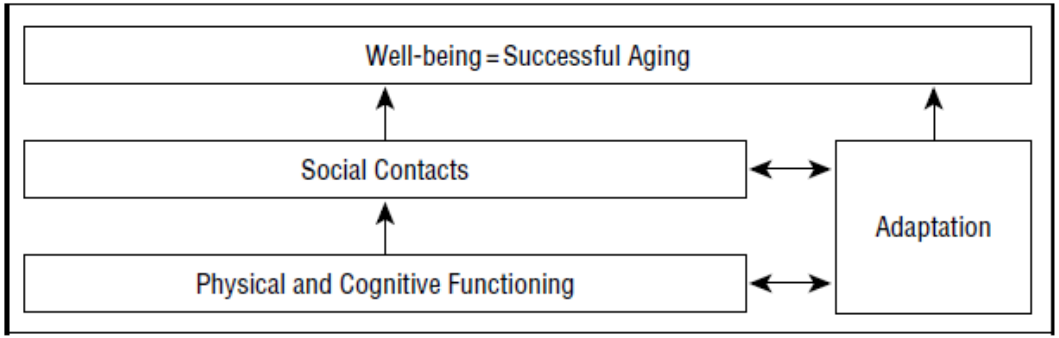


Figure 2. Qualitative model of successful aging.

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION

Successful Aging in the Oldest Old

Who Can Be Characterized as Successfully Aged?

Margaret von Faber, MA; Annetje Bootsma–van der Wiel, MD; Eric van Exel, MD; Jacobijn Gussekloo, MD, PhD; Anne M. Lagaay, MD, PhD; Els van Dongen, MA, PhD; Dick L. Knook, PhD; Sjaak van der Geest, MA, PhD; Rudi G. J. Westendorp, MD, PhD

Lara et al. BMC Medicine (2015) 13:222
DOI 10.1186/s12916-015-0470-9

BMC Medicine

OPINION Open Access

A proposed panel of biomarkers of healthy ageing

Jose Lara[1], Rachel Cooper[2], Jack Nissan[3], Annie T Ginty[4], Kay-Tee Khaw[5], Ian J Deary[3], Janet M Lord[6], Diana Kuh[2] and John C Mathers[1*]

Abstract

Background: There is no criterion reference for assessing healthy ageing and this creates difficulties when conducting and comparing research on ageing across studies. A cardinal feature of ageing is loss of function which translates into wide-ranging consequences for the individual and for family, carers and society. We undertook comprehensive reviews of the literature searching for biomarkers of ageing on five ageing-related domains including physical capability and cognitive, physiological and musculoskeletal, endocrine and immune functions. Where available, we used existing systematic reviews, meta-analyses and other authoritative reports such as the recently launched NIH Toolbox for assessment of neurological and behavioural function, which includes test batteries for cognitive and motor function

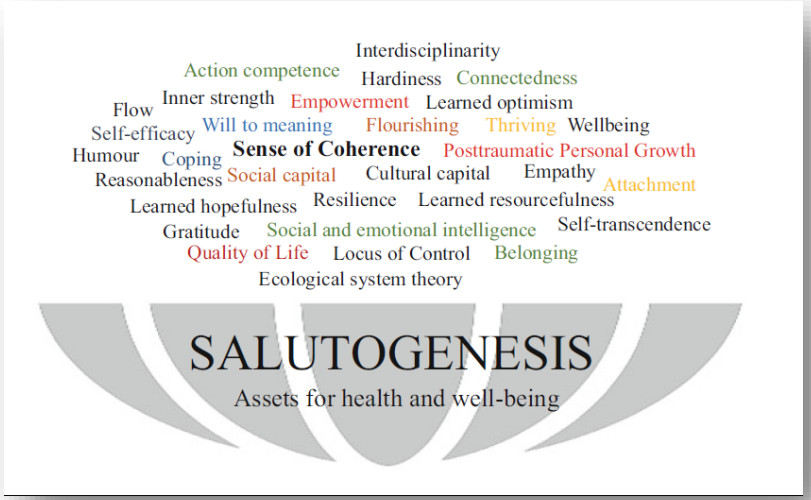
Background



Fig. 2 Proposed panel of biomarkers of healthy ageing

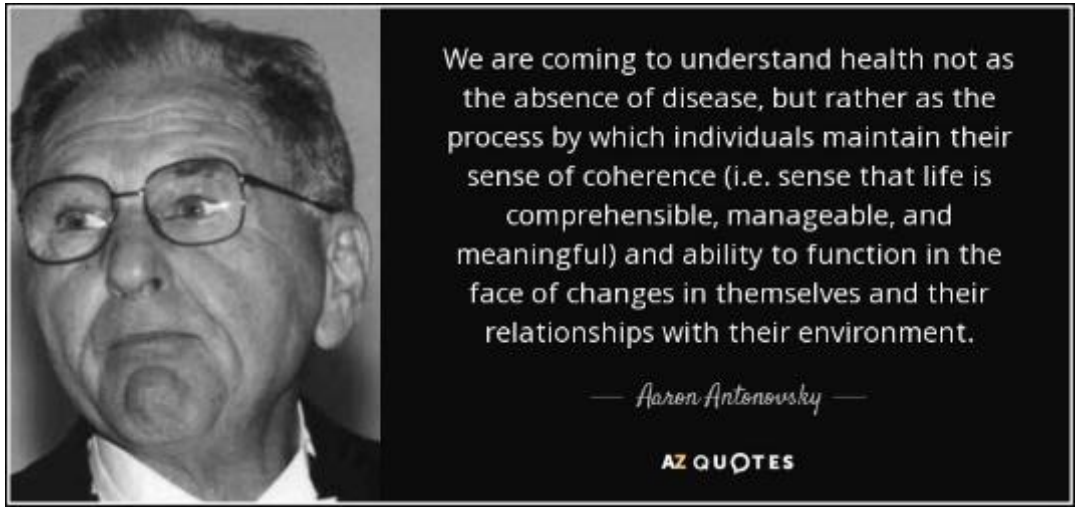
The concept of “salutogenesis”

- Saluto (health) + genesis (origins)
- How do we stay healthy?



The salutogenic umbrella (Eriksson M, Mittelmark M 2017)

The concept of “Sense of coherence”



The concept of sense of coherence (SOC) was put forward by Aaron Antonovsky in 1979 to explain why some people become ill under stress and others stay healthy

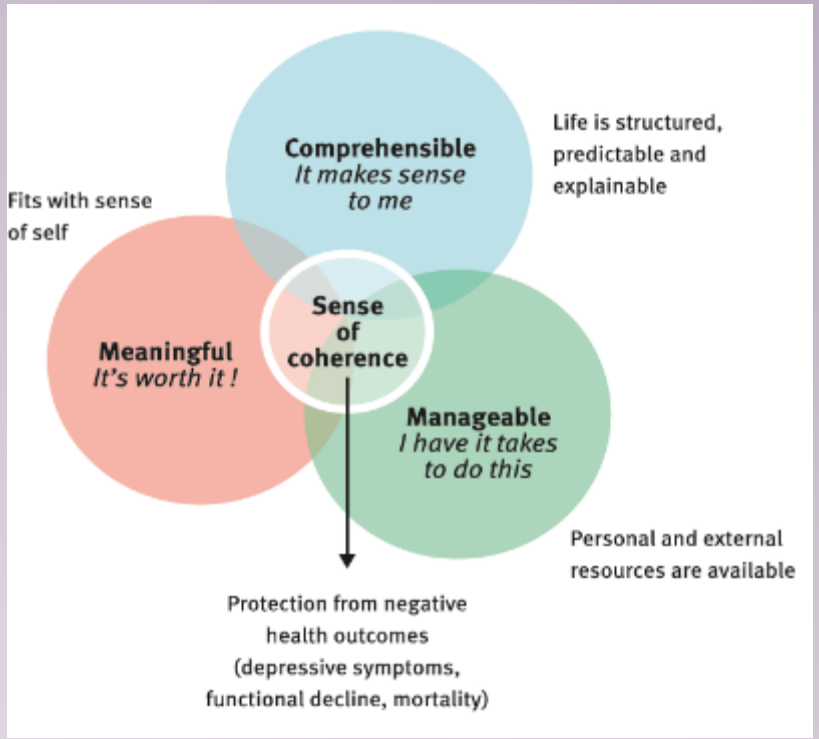
Sense of Coherence (SOC)

"A global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement."

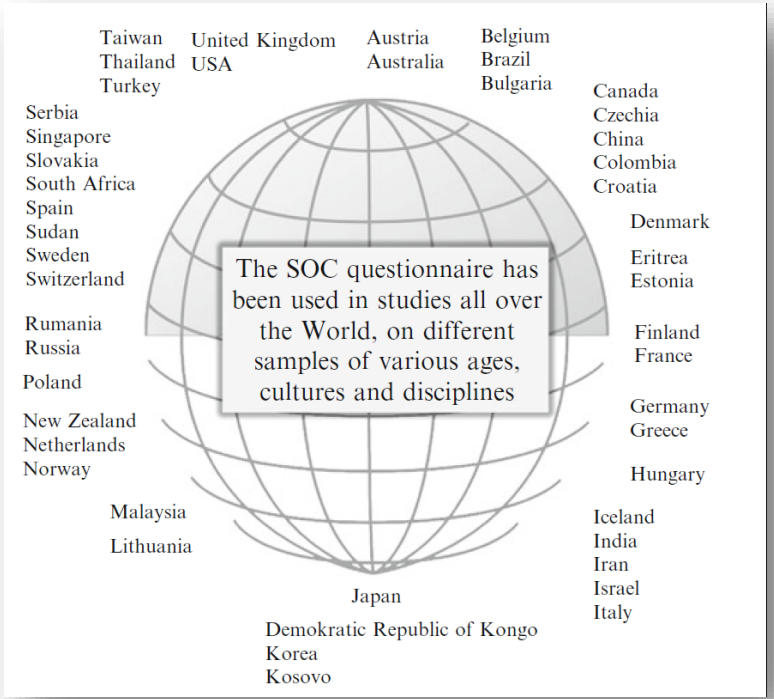
Antonovsky 1979



SOC has three components



SOC has been studies in many countries



SOC can be measured

- Questionnaire has in it's orginal form 29 items
- A shorter version of 13 questions (SOC-13) was developed.
- Each item is scored on a semantic scale 1-7
- Total score ranging from 13 to 91 points.

https://www.stars-society.org/socscales

Dutch version: https://www.focusonemotions.nl/images/SOC-13.pdf



Items in the SOC scale

Comprehensibility:

“Hoe vaak gebeurt het je dat je zelf niet helemaal begrijpt wat je denkt en voelt?

Manageability:

“Hoe vaak heb je het gevoel dat je in een onbekende situatie bent en je niet weet wat je moet doen? “

Meaningfulness

“Hoe vaak heb je het gevoel dat de dingen die je elke dag doet, niet zo belangrijk zijn? “

Sense of Coherence as a trait

- SOC has well documented psychometrical characteristics (validy, reliability)
- SOC develops until the age of about 30 years , and appears to remain stable until retirement after which a decrease was expected (Antonovsky 1987)
- However SOC seems to be realtively stable over time and some studies indicate a continous growth. (Feldt et al 2011)
- There is a lack o longitudinal studies with long-term follow-up

SOC as a protection factor?

A High Sense of Coherence as Protection Against Adverse Health Outcomes in Patients Aged 80 Years and Older

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Bert Vaes MD, Phd[2,3]
An De Sutter MD, PbD[1]
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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE We set out to assess whether a high sense of coherence (SOC) protects from adverse health outcomes in patients aged 80 years and older who have multiple chronic diseases.

METHODS A population-based prospective cohort study in 29 primary care practices throughout Belgium included 567 individuals aged 80 years and older. We plotted the highest tertile of SOC scores in Kaplan-Meier curves representing 3-year mortality and time to first hospitalization. Using Cox proportional hazard regression analyses and multiple logistic regression analyses adjusted for sociodemographic characteristics, depression, cognition, disability, and multimorbidity we examined the relationship between SOC and mortality, hospitalization, and decline in performance of activities of daily living (ADL).

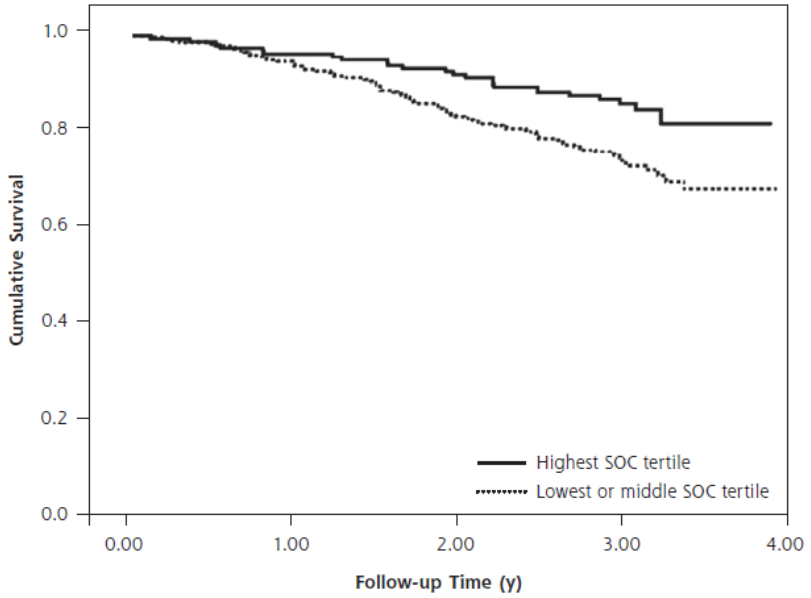
RESULTS Subjects with high SOC scores showed a higher cumulative survival than others (Log rank = 0.004) independent of other prognostic characteristics (adjusted hazard ratio 0.62 (95% CI, 0.38-1.00), *P* = .049). For ADL decline, a high SOC was shown to be protective, and this effect tended to be independent from the covariates under study (adjusted odds ratio 0.56 (95% CI, 0.31-1.0), *P* = .05).

CONCLUSION Even very elderly persons with high SOC scores were shown to have lower mortality rates and less functional decline. These effects were independent of multimorbidity, depression, cognition, disability, and sociodemographic characteristics.

Ann Fam Med 2016;14:337-343. doi: 10.1370/afm.1950.

SOC as a protection factor?

Figure 2. The predictive value of a high SOC score for survival from all-cause mortality.



SOC = sense of coherence.

SOC as a protection factor?

Table 2. Predictive Value of Sociodemographic Characteristics, SOC, Baseline Disability, Indicators of Mental Functioning, and Measures of Multimorbidity for Mortality, Hospitalization, and ADL Decline

	Mortality (n = 106)		Hospitalization (n = 241)		ADL Decline (n = 96)	
Characteristic	Crude Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	Adjusted Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	Crude Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	Adjusted Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	Crude Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)
SOC (highest tertile)	0.52 (0.33-0.81)[a]	0.62 (0.38-1.0)[a]	0.87 (0.66-1.1)	0.90 (0.68-1.2)	0.51 (0.30-0.89)[a]	0.56 (0.31-1.0)[b]
Age	1.1 (1.0-1.1)[a]	1.0 (0.99-1.1)	1.0 (1.0-1.1)[a]	1.0 (0.99-1.1)	1.1 (1.1-1.2)[a]	1.1 (1.0-1.2)[a]
Men	1.0 (0.68-1.5)	1.3 (0.87-2.0)	1.1 (0.89-1.5)	1.3 (0.87-2.0)	1.2 (0.72-1.9)	1.2 (0.69-2.1)
Family situation	1.2 (1.0-1.5)[a]	1.2 (0.96-1.4)	0.98 (0.87-1.1)	1.2 (0.96 -1.4)	0.95 (0.77-1.2)	0.83 (0.64-1.1)
Level of education > primary school	1.0 (0.69-1.5)	1.4 (0.92-2.1)	1.2 (0.92-1.6)	1.4 (1.1-1.8)[a]	1.0 (0.62-1.6)	1.2 (0.73-2.1)
GDS-15 score >5	1.6 (1.0-2.4)[a]	0.94 (0.59-1.5)	1.3 (0.97-1.8)	1.1 (0.78-1.5)	1.0 (0.57-1.9)	0.85 (0.43-1.7)
MMSE (categories)	2.0 (1.5-2.6)[c]	1.8 (1.3-2.3)[c]	1.3 (1.1-1.6)[a]	1.3 (1.1-1.6)[a]	2.1 (1.4-3.1)[a]	2.1 (1.3-3.4)
ADL disability (lowest sex-specific quartile)	2.9 (2.0-4.3)[c]	2.1 (1.4-3.3)[a]	1.9 (1.4-2.6)[c]	1.6 (1.2-2.3)[a]	1.3 (0.7-2.3)	0.97 (0.50-1.9)
DC (categories)[d]	1.5 (1.2-1.9)[c]	1.1 (1.0-1.2)[a]	1.6 (1.4-1.9)[c]	1.6 (1.4-1.9)[c]	1.0 (0.77-1.4)	0.98 (0.71-1.3)

ADL = activities of daily living; DC = disease count; GDS = Geriatric Depression Scale; MMSE = Mini-Mental State Examination; SOC = sense of coherence.

[a] $P < .05$.

[b] $P = .05$.

[c] $P < .001$.

[d] Disease count categories: Level 1: DC <3; level 2: DC 3-4; level 3: DC >5.

The concept of “Self-compassion”



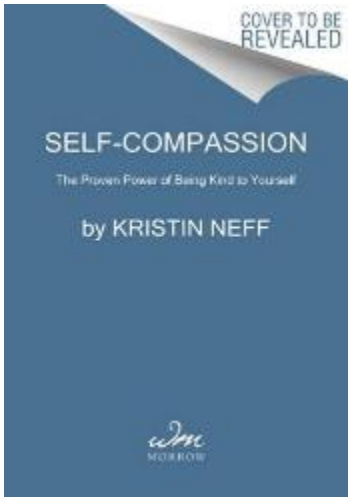
Kristien Neff

“Self-compassion can be defined as relating toward the self with kindness and acceptance, especially during challenging moments of suffering or stress “

The construct could explain why some people experience better late-life adjustment than others.

Neff, KD (20013). The development of a scale to measure self-compassion. Self and Identity 2, (223-250)

The concept of “Self-compassion”



Self-compassion involves the relative predominance of three positive qualities:

mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity—

over their opposites:

overidentification, self-criticism, and a sense of isolation.

Neff, KD (20013). The development of a scale to measure self-compassion. Self nd Identity 2, (223-250)

Self-compassion can be measured

- Two scales have been developed:
  - The original 26 item SC scale (Neff 2002)
  - The short 12 item SC scale (Raes et al 2011)

Both are available in many different languages from



Items in de Self-Compassion scales

Items belong tow six different domains and are scored on a scale from 1 to 7 (almost never to almost always)

Self-kindness items

Als ik een moeilijke tijd meemaak, geef ik mezelf de zorg die ik nodig heb.

Self-Judment Items

Ik ben intolerant en ongeduldig tegenover die kanten van mezelf die me niet bevallen.

Common Humanity Items

Als er iets pijnlijks gebeurt, probeer ik een gebalanceerde kijk op de situatie in te nemen.

Items in de Self-Compassion scales

Items belong tow six different domains and are scored on a scale from 1 to 5 (almost never to almost always)

Isolation items

When I think about my inadequacies , it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.

Mindfulness items

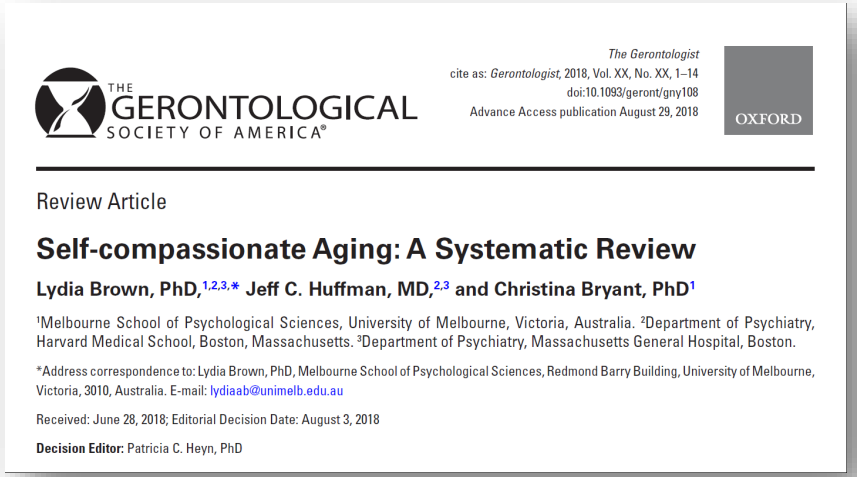
When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance. .

Over-identified Items

When I am feelin down I tend oto bsess and fixate on everything that is wrong.



On going research...



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The Gerontologist
cite as: *Gerontologist*, 2018, Vol. XX, No. XX, 1–14
doi:10.1093/geront/gny108
Advance Access publication August 29, 2018

OXFORD

Review Article

Self-compassionate Aging: A Systematic Review

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Received: June 28, 2018; Editorial Decision Date: August 3, 2018

Decision Editor: Patricia C. Heyn, PhD

Research question:

"The aim of the study was to systematically review the literature on self-compassion and well-being outcomes in studies of older adults aged 65 and older"

Conclusion:

This review presents preliminary evidence that self-compassion is a useful construct that may facilitate adaptive adjustment to ageing. Self-compassion is associated with psychological health in older adults, and those high on self-compassion appear to be less psychologically distressed by health issues than those low on self-compassion

On going research...



Geriatric Nursing 39 (2018) 623–628

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Geriatric Nursing

journal homepage: www.gnjournal.com

Feature Article

The impact of self-compassion on mental health, sleep, quality of life and life satisfaction among older adults

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 30 March 2018
Accepted 8 June 2018
Available online 24 July 2018

Keywords:
Aged
Life satisfaction
Mental health
Self-compassion
Sleep disturbance
Quality of life

ABSTRACT

Given South Korea's rapidly aging population, mental health and quality of life (QoL) in older adults are increasingly becoming important. Self-compassion (SC), defined as extending compassion to oneself in times of suffering, has been found to have associations with positive mental health outcomes. This study was performed to examine associations between self-compassion and mental health symptoms, sleep disturbance, life satisfaction, and health-related quality of life (HR-QoL) among older Korean adults. The participants in this cross-sectional study included 203 older Korean adults aged 65 and over. Findings of this study suggest that self-compassion in older adults protects them from developing mental health and sleep disturbance symptoms while enhancing their life satisfaction, self-care, and usual activities. Therefore, interventions fostering self-compassion may benefit older adults' mental health and quality of life.

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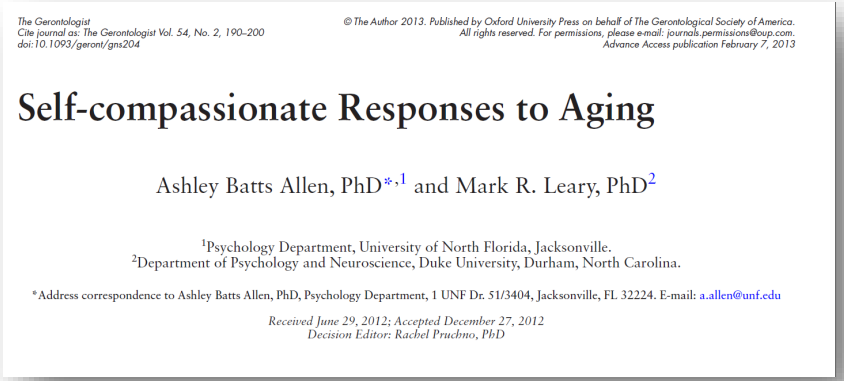
Research question:

"The aim of the study was to examine the associations between self-compassion and mental health symptoms, sleep disturbance, life statisfaction and Health related quality of life"

Conclusion:

Our findings indicate that self-compassion in older adults can decrease mental health symptoms and sleep disturbance symptoms and promote life satisfaction, self-care and usual activities.

On going research...



The Gerontologist
Cite journal as: The Gerontologist Vol. 54, No. 2, 190–200
doi:10.1093/geront/gns204

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Advance Access publication February 7, 2013

Self-compassionate Responses to Aging

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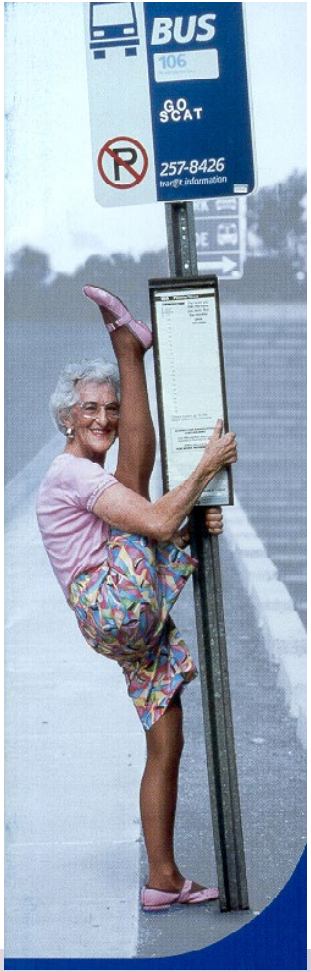
Received June 29, 2012; Accepted December 27, 2012
Decision Editor: Rachel Pruchno, PhD

Research question:

"The purpose of this study was to assess the thoughts of self-compassionate older adults and to determine whether self-compassionate thoughts relate to positive responses to aging.

Conclusion:

Although older adults who were low versus high in self-compassion experienced similar age-related events, participants high in self-compassion thought about these events in ways that predicted positive outcomes. Encouraging older adults to be more self-compassionate may improve well-being in old age.



Thank you !

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