

Journal #3:
Young at Heart
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Invite to World of Aging
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Young at Heart is a chorus group of 24 members, with an average age of 80. Death is an aspect of the film; however, the main purpose is to show the world how to live in elderly years. As members of the group pass away, other members are greatly affected, yet, keep singing and moving forward. This support group is essential to the elderly, because depression often plays a huge role during this time of life. There is clear evidence that there is a link between physical health and depression, in fact treating and preventing depression can improve physical health in older adults. Similarly, being psychologically healthy is also important to being physically healthy and active in these years. Remaining active, in ways such as dancing, walking, or swimming in these years is crucial to living a healthy life as being active means a stronger heart. "Older adults who regularly participate in aerobic exercise can be in better shape than sedentary middle-age adults" (book). That just goes to show that staying active can add years onto ones life. To go along with both physical health and psychological health, mental health is greatly important. This is exemplified in the wise words of one of the chorus members, "If you don't use it, you lose it." This means you have to keep your brain stimulated constantly or you will lose your brain power. In this group, the member's brains are constantly stimulated in song and memorization; yet, one can keep their fluid intelligence up in other ways, such as doing cross-word puzzles or Sudoku puzzles. Lastly, and most importantly everyone needs a purpose in life, something to keep you determined and moving forward. "What gets you up in the morning?" For some it may be family, but for others as in the Young at Heart chorus group it is the need to be there for their fellow members, and out of respect for the group.

This society has turned into a materialist society, where people are judged on their physical appearance and beauty instead of their heart and soul. The Western society has attached a negative stigma to many groups of people, including the elderly. However, the Young at Heart chorus challenges many of those negative views towards the elderly population. For example, many of the members are very quick and witty, going against the stereotype that elderly people are slow processing and cranky. Also, in order to memorize entire songs in a couple of weeks it takes great memory, breaking the stereotype that all elderly have a poor memory. It also brings up the question, do elderly people have sex? The answer is yes, and in fact one member said, "It is better because it takes longer and you can have more fun." This film presents what the elderly years can really be like, and totally goes against what our society actually thinks about aging.

As positive of an experience on healthy aging being a member of the Young at Heart chorus group may sound, there are some negative consequences of being a part of this group. First, the more elderly people you know, the better chance of one of your close friends passing away from old age. Being a part of Young at Heart, death is a reoccurring event, and even with a strong determination and support group it can take a toll on your psychological health. Another, downfall of being part of this group is that you have limited to no interaction with the younger population. Interacting with the younger population keeps you up to date with current events and technology; ultimately these interactions help "keep you young."

I have always assumed with old age brings seriousness and calmness; however, after watching this film I know that is not the case. This was one of the funniest films I have seen in awhile, and there were two parts in particular that made me laugh out loud.

First was when Fred Knittle was telling his secrets how to stay married for 54 years. He said, "We stayed together for the kids, she didn't want them and neither did I. We did things romantically, we went dining and dancing twice a week, I went Tuesday she went Thursday. Then our marriage was built on faith and trust. She had no faith in me, and I didn't trust her." This showed me that you can still have a wonderful sense of humor when elderly. Another, part of the film that caught my eye was when Bob Cilman asks, "Jean, did you see that white light that everybody talks about?" Then Jean responded laughing, "No. I refused to look." While watching this film I was constantly amazed about the acceptance of death the members of the chorus have. They took a humorous approach towards death to make it less scary and more acceptable. Many of the members say that they have lived a good life and God will take them when it is time.

Before watching this film, I thought that every elderly person in need of help from a social worker was not independent and would need help with daily routines. That may be the case in some situations; however, I have learned that setting up support groups or even home visits with completely independent elderly people is also part of social work.