



PERMA-A as a Model for Positive Aging

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Kathryn Britton

Courtesy Alex Promois - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/34120957@N04/7037584677/>

<http://theano-coaching.com>

kathryn@theano-coaching.com

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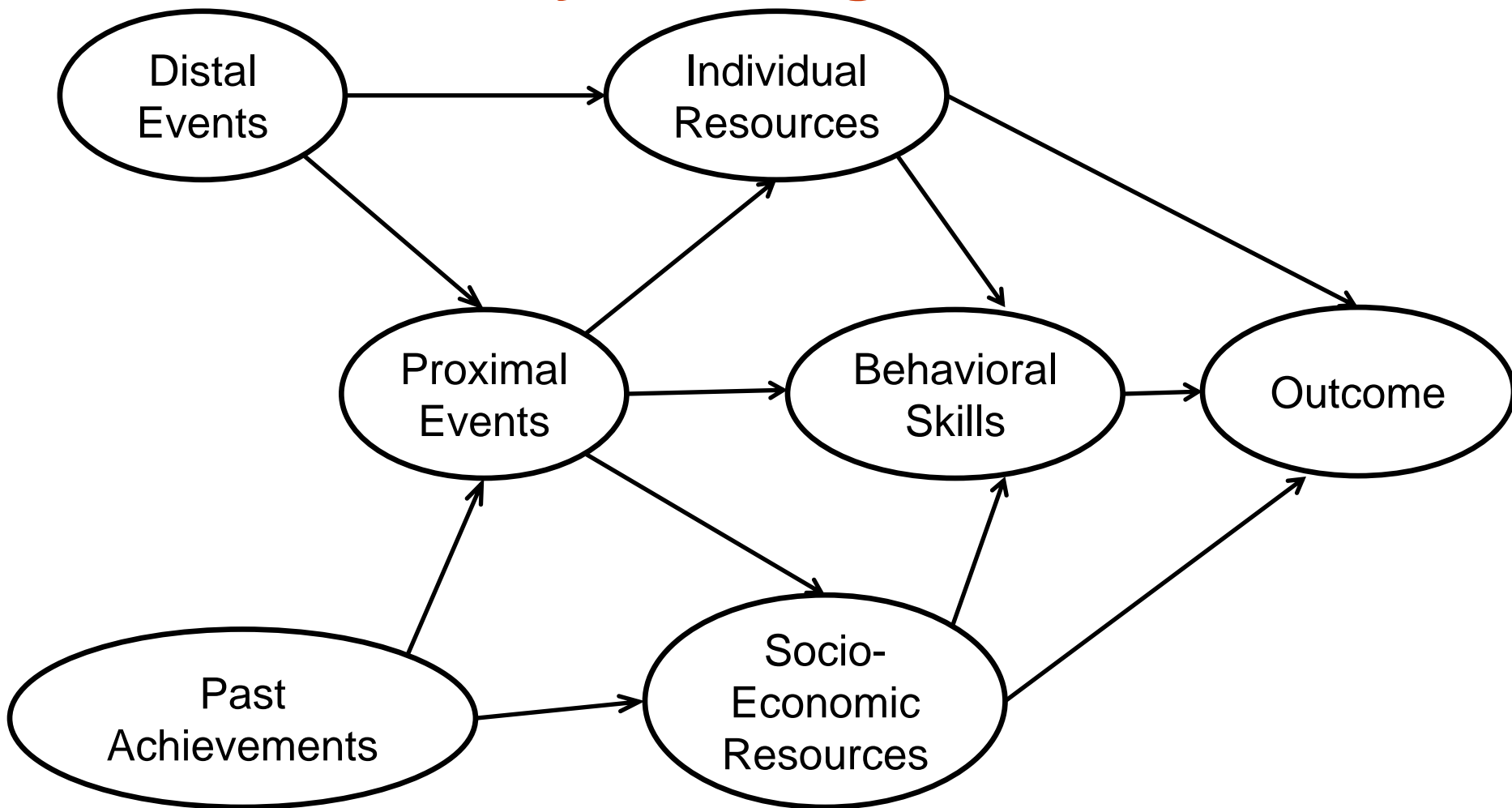
A Challenge at the Edge

- “To help people accept the reality of diminishment and death in oldest old age in a way that preserves dignity and quality of life.” a close friend
- For elders & care givers



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/21479883@N05/3079992466/>

Developmental Adaptation Model → Think beyond single causes



Peter Martin et al,

Positive Emotion

Even with cognitive impairment...



“ ...She is an Alzheimer’s patient. She no longer maintains a narrative of her life, but her experiencing self is still sensitive to beauty and gentleness.”

Daniel Kahneman, (2011).
Thinking Fast and Slow

Ethel’s Memory

Engagement: Value of Active Leisure

- Resilience → cumulative protective factors
- Continuity → supports existing meaning
- Innovation → “broadening and deepening one’s sense of meaning in life.”

Nimrod, Impact of leisure activity . . .



Marie and the card box

Relationships: Tales of Children & Parents

Ivy & her
sister-in-law



Distal attitudes/events shape today's perceived meaning.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/26825967@N05/4090200698> - Rosie O'Beirne

Relationships: Social Selectivity



- Tendency to discard peripheral relationships
- Importance of ***anticipated support***→

Direct impact on meaning

**Marian:
I'll be there for you.**

Relationships: Tale of Shared Travels

**Long-time
friends**



Experience is storing up things to
find joy in remembering together.

Meaning: Where does it come from?

Some of the meaning that we give our lives is

- From connections with our past,
- From bringing the past into the present
- From projecting the past and the present into the future in a new way.

Reker, Birren, & Svensson
Restoring, maintaining, and enhancing
personal meaning in life through
autobiographical methods



Jesse

“ the universal human tendency to integrate personal experiences into a unified sense of self... Thus people generally conceive their world as benevolent and predictable, and their self as worthy...”

Schmotkin & Shrira,
On the distinction between subjective well-being and meaning in life

Meaning

- Deriving a sense of meaning is hard work – insight, introspection, grappling with abstracts
- Adoption of positive assumptions, beliefs, expectations
 - ▶ self as worthy
 - ▶ world as beneficial and predictable
- Learning to see the value of being served

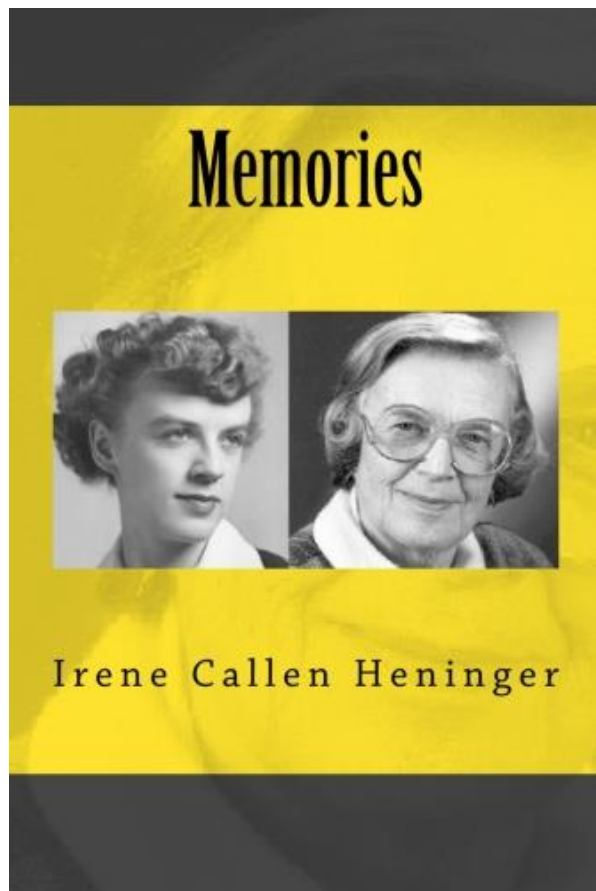
Shmotkin & Shrira



INPM - nurse

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/shward/1347464131/>

Accomplishments



**Personal
biographers**

Dov Shmotkin → making sense of the trajectory of an entire life

Interviews, storytelling, having an audience

Something to leave behind...

Tale of Past Achievement

Source of pride and relief
or source of loss?



**Marian and the
newspaper**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/15302609@N00/5349063128/> - Bonnie Natko

Let's append Autonomy to PERMA-A



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/21131327@N00/167380253/> - Chris Martin

Making own decisions yesterday
Makes a difference today

3 Situations

“ ...M. always moved to the next stage of life without looking back and regretting the stage that had just passed and without trying to hurry through to the next stage. When she was a mother of small children, she was a mother of small children without wanting to speed up her children’s growing up. When she was a very old woman, she figured out how to enjoy the benefits of old age without (much) mourning of the abilities that had passed or the traveling she could no longer do.”



Positive
Psychology
Reflections
[http://tinyurl.com/
EndsinBeauty](http://tinyurl.com/EndsinBeauty)

Acknowledgments: Thanks go out to...

- **Close friends** for stories about their parents
- All my friends at **Positive Psychology News Daily** for ideas and encouragement
- Diana Boufford for help she has given me – and for letting me reuse her ice-cream story



Sources

Numerous chapters in the following books:

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- Neal Krause: Meaning in life and healthy aging
- Reker & Wong, Personal meaning in life and psychosocial adaptation in the later years
- Reker, Birren, Svensson, Restoring, maintaining, and enhancing personal meaning through autobiographical methods

Poon & Cohen-Mansfield (2011). Understanding well-being in the oldest old.

- Cohen-Mansfield, Shifting baseline theory of well-being
- Martin et al, Model of Developmental Adaptation: Implications for understanding well-being in old-old age
- Dov Schmotkin, Pursuit of happiness: Alternative conceptions of well-being
- Litwin, Social relationships and well-being in very late life
- Nimrod, Impact of leisure activity and innovation on the well-being of the oldest old



My Articles on this Subject

- As We Age: Positive Emotions and Emotional Complexity
- Finding Meaning in a Shrinking World
- The Sandwich Generation: Looking Both Ways
- Life Stories of the Oldest Old



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