



The Aging Person

*A Holistic
Perspective*

Lucille D. Gress • Sister Rose Therese Bahr

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Illustrated

The C. V. Mosby Company

ST. LOUIS TORONTO 1984



A TRADITION OF PUBLISHING EXCELLENCE

Editor: Julie Cardamon
Assistant editor: Bess Arends
Manuscript editor: Stephen Dierkes
Design: Suzanne Oberholtzer
Production: Carol O'Leary, Teresa Breckwoldt, Judy England

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Printed in the United States of America

The C.V. Mosby Company
11830 Westline Industrial Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63146

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Gress, Lucille D.

The aging person.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Geriatric nursing. I. Bahr, Rose Therese.
II. Title. [DNLM: 1. Aging—Nursing texts. 2. Geriatrics—Nursing texts. 3. Holistic health—Nursing texts.
WY 152 G832a]

RC954.G73 1984 362.6'042 83-8209

ISBN 0-8016-2032-5

AC/VH/VH 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 01/D/015

To our grandparents, parents, other family members, and friends,
who in many ways contributed toward the philosophy
of life and aging inherent in this work.
They contributed to an appreciation
of older persons' humanness and
value in leavening the wholeness of life;
the energizing life force and the caring concern
expressed by these people is inspirational to and
supportive of others along the life continuum.
Life at the end of a long journey is as valued as at its beginning.

Foreword

Holism emphasizes the wholeness of the older person and his or her self-agency. This wholeness encompasses the concepts of body, mind, and spirit and interactions with the environment; it promotes respect for human beings, their unique needs, and their right to continue development of personhood across the life span. Ultimately, the older person is worthy of respect and dignity whatever his or her status may be. This view projects life as a continuum from birth to death, calling attention to the wholeness of life as well as to the wholeness of the older person.

Because the needs of older persons are complex, individuals from many disciplines are needed to promote health and wellness in each dimension of the person: physical, psychological, sociological, and spiritual. The personhood of the older individual is the primary focus of this book; its content has implications for individuals of various professional orientations and for lay persons concerned with their own older family members.

What is caring for the older person all about? Answers found in this book can facilitate an understanding of the person experiencing the universal process of aging, and of the role that nursing and other related disciplines play in making the transition from one developmental stage to the other easier. This book is aptly titled, for it reflects all the dimensions of the older person.

During the past decade there has been a marked increase in literature concerning care of the older adult. From my perspective as a nurse, I see that nurses with expertise in caring for the aged are slowly but surely helping to correct misconceptions about the care of older adults.

In the newly emerging specialty of gerontological nursing, the challenge of fulfilling basic human needs is being met by nurses who recognize the necessity of preparation in the area of human development and aging and of acquisition of the requisite skills. Gerontological nursing is complex in nature and experimental by design, and requires continuing education. As more nurse scholars, such as the authors of this volume, share their knowledge of caring for the aged, nurses will have an opportunity to develop consensual yet creative methodologies for the provision of high-quality holistic care to older adults.

Attempts have already been made to define care of the older person

from a holistic perspective. These authors, by placing emphasis on the spiritual dimension, have helped to close a gap in the literature. Attending to the spiritual dimension of the older person is an acknowledgment of the continuing development of the interior self characteristic of older persons. Enhancement of the spirit promotes health and wellness in the older individual.

The authors of this book are highly energized individuals who inspire others to view older persons holistically. They demonstrate a deep sensitivity for students and older clients alike. As scholars they are ever searching for the truth about and beauty of older persons. I have had the distinct pleasure of working with Sr. Rose Therese Bahr and Lucille Gress for approximately 5 years as they implemented an innovative grant aimed at the preparation of gerontological clinical nurse specialists. This book is a natural result of their philosophy and lives. I feel honored and privileged to introduce their book. The holistic perspective in this book should help its readers to have more of an understanding of themselves as older persons, of nursing as a dynamic, unique profession with a logical methodology called nursing process, and of the beautiful, inspiring, and awesome challenge that is gerontological nursing. Readers should sense the authors' enthusiasm as they draw nurses and others into a congruent, humanistic, holistic, and truly professional perspective of older persons—our present and future selves.

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Preface

Writing this book came about because of our interest in older persons and our concern for the increasing need to understand them as fully human persons. In view of their increasing longevity, demographics, and basic needs and rights, attention should be given to a holistic approach to persons in the later years of life. Although many books on gerontology and the aging process have been written, few focus on the continuing development of older adults from a holistic perspective.

The emphasis of this book is on the older person having the right to self-determination through the exercise of self-agency and self-care. Learning to exercise self-determination is a part of the developmental process that enables the person to become whatever he or she is capable of becoming. From a holistic perspective, this developmental process is achieved through the dynamic interchange of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—with his or her total environment. If dependency needs arise and assistance is required, helping persons should respect and protect the integrity and the rights of the older person.

During aging, the person becomes increasingly differentiated and unique, and often more introspective. Self-understanding, the relationship of the self to the environment, and the question of the purpose of life often become a greater challenge to the person in later years than was the case in earlier years. Appreciation of this challenge is important to those who are interacting with and helping the older individual to maintain integrity.

Our intent is to explore within a holistic framework various factors influencing the continuing development of the older person. Although many variables contribute to the complexity of the human being, the thrust of the life force is toward a unified whole. We contend that, having received the gift of life, the older person no less than the younger person should experience the affirmation of being and share in the joys and celebration of life as a fully human being.

This book is intended for use as a textbook by graduate and undergraduate nursing students, and as a reference book for nurses working with older persons in various settings and individuals from other disciplines, such as social workers, pharmacists, nutritionists, clergymen, and occupational and physical therapists. The primary focus is on the human-

ness of older persons and their right to continue developing their potential as thinking, feeling, loving, and acting human beings. The book is aimed at promoting understanding and appreciation of older persons who continue striving toward personhood during their later years. Hence it has implications for anyone concerned with the well-being of older individuals.

In Chapter 1 an overview of the older person in the later years of development is offered within a holistic framework. A brief description of aging and an exploration of concepts related to holistic health and health care are presented.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of health and wellness applicable to the older person. Individual, community, and national perspectives are offered as a foundation for understanding the importance of health and wellness in the life of each person who is aging.

The terms *person*, *personhood*, and *personality* are analyzed in Chapter 3. This discussion encompasses philosophical, psychological, and sociological consideration of the essence of human nature as it matures over a life span and culminates in the beauty of character expressed in the personhood of the older individual.

Chapter 4 considers the older person from a developmental perspective. Attention is given to the concepts of development, various definitions and types of aging, growth and development in the later years, developmental orientations and theories, and other related topics.

The changes of aging—biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual—and the challenges these changes pose for older persons are explored in Chapter 5. In addition, the challenges that these changes hold for care givers are examined.

The focus of Chapter 6 is on the concepts of motivation and high-level wellness as they relate to the older person. The concept of motivation and selected theories of motivation and personality development are discussed. Developmental aspects of motivation and models of aging are presented with a final commentary on the relevance of motivation to high-level wellness.

A discussion of those theories of self-care related to continued betterment of the older adult is presented in Chapter 7. The use of theories and theory-building in health care and nursing practice is described as an essential component in the care of older individuals. The self-care movement as a societal trend is analyzed; Orem's self-care agency theory and Kinlein's theory of care are used in demonstrating the importance of developing the self-care agency of older adults for the promotion of health, wellness, and independence.

Chapter 8 presents the promotion of personhood of aging individuals, using for analysis the components of life satisfaction, health, and the cele-

bration of life as demonstrated through a variety of coping and adapting processes (e.g., relationships, communication techniques, zest for living, and achievement of life's goals). Two case histories of older adults who celebrate life daily are presented as examples for all older individuals.

In Chapter 9, an overview of the historical development of gerontological nursing is presented, based on Nightingale's formulation of nursing and the societal forces that created current issues and dilemmas faced by health professionals.

Chapter 10 deals with the older person and the nursing process. It includes a historical perspective of the nursing process and components of a philosophy of nursing. Four phases of the nursing process are defined and elaborated on with respect to the older person.

The older person and support system networks are discussed in Chapter 11. Systems theory, the concept of support, and support systems are briefly described. In addition, the concept of networks and types of support system networks are presented. Models of informal support systems and changing relationships in the informal support systems network are examined with consideration of strengthening the support systems. A review of support systems networks as they pertain to the rural elderly is also included. Finally, examples of support systems and the services they provide in support of the self-agency and strengths of older persons are given.

The Epilogue deals with perspectives of aging, past, present, and future. Aging is viewed within the context of social change. This concept of aging and continuing societal developments is explored and includes the concomitant development of the nursing profession in the field of aging. The perspectives of the future and challenges of aging are also explored. The potential for a bright future and the concept of a new world of brotherhood based on the worth and dignity of human beings are presented. Issues are raised regarding human values and rights with respect to the quality of life of each person in terms of humanness and in view of scientific advancements. The importance of helping each person realize a greater quality of life (as a priority over quantity of life) is pointed out. Meeting the challenge of this priority would, in turn, contribute to the well-being of society and the attainment of world brotherhood.

Our approach to the subject of this book is an outgrowth of our early experience within family constellations where a respect for and appreciation of older persons was a natural part of family relationships and interactions. Our philosophy of aging has continued to be expressed to students of gerontological nursing, numerous older persons, their adult children, and professional colleagues. In addition, our research efforts and presentations at workshops on national, regional, and local levels have

reflected a continuing appreciation of the worth of older persons engaged in the pursuit of personhood. Attendance at various international and national meetings related to gerontology and gerontological nursing has expanded the breadth and scope of our knowledge. We have acquired expertise in direct interactions with older persons in various settings. Our convictions about older persons and their care have been reinforced by an ongoing review of the literature and by the response of older persons, family members, and professional colleagues.

Lucille D. Gress
Sister Rose Therese Bahr

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many persons who contributed to the development of this book including the older persons who graciously and freely gave of themselves and in so doing enhanced the quality and authenticity of this work.

We appreciate the cooperation and contribution of the administration and older persons at Mid-City Towers, Kansas City, Missouri, a high-rise primarily for the black elderly; St. Joseph Home, Kansas City, Kansas, a health care center for older adults; and El Centro, Kansas City, Kansas, a social center for Hispanic elderly. These individuals contributed toward the cultural diversity found in this book and demonstrated the enrichment that can occur with the celebration of life in later years.

In addition, we wish to acknowledge the Department of Audio-Visual Services at the University of Kansas College of Health Sciences and Hospital for the illustrations and photographs.

We also wish to express appreciation for the encouragement, support, and guidance provided by members of the staff of The C.V. Mosby Company. Their prompt, courteous response to numerous questions facilitated the writing process and helped make it a valuable learning experience for us.

Our grateful appreciation is extended to the reviewers who carefully read and critiqued the rough drafts of the manuscript. Feedback from these "invisible" persons influenced the quality of the final manuscript and their comments and interest afforded support to us.

Special thanks is extended to members of the staff and older adult participants at the Shepherd's Center, Kansas City, Missouri, a multipurpose center with programs designed by and for older adults in the metropolitan area. The interest in and support of gerontological nursing at the University of Kansas College of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, continues to be a source of strength to us.

Finally, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to Jan Black, who shared a personal interest in the development of the manuscript and painstakingly typed beautiful copy from the almost illegible rough drafts. Her unflinching interest in and enthusiasm for the project helped us stay the course and meet the deadline for submission of the completed manuscript. Jan's loyalty and perseverance is commendable and deeply appreciated.

Contents

- 1 A Holistic Perspective: an Overview, 1
- 2 Perspectives on Health and Wellness, 9
- 3 The Older Person and Personhood, 17
- 4 A Developmental Perspective, 33
- 5 Changes and Challenges, 60
- 6 Motivation and High-level Wellness, 92
- 7 Theories of Self-care and Personhood, 122
- 8 A Celebration of Life, 139
- 9 Gerontological Nursing: the Emergence of a Specialty, 169
- 10 The Nursing Process, 191
- 11 Support Systems Networks, 227
- Epilogue, 261**

Chapter 1 **A Holistic Perspective: an Overview**



Ethel L. Sixta

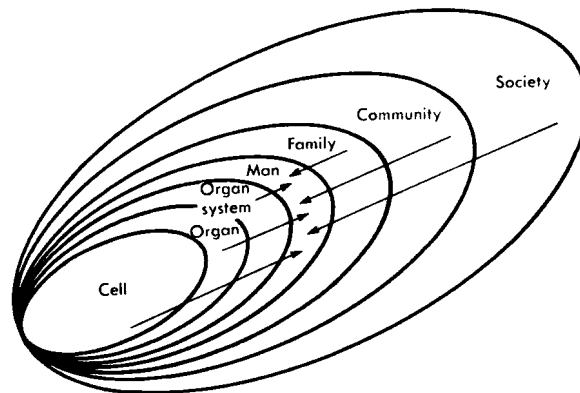
From a holistic perspective, the older person may be viewed as a human being striving toward unity and wholeness throughout the life span. This striving takes place within the context of an ever-changing environment, internal and external. Through a dynamic, interdependent relationship with these environments, the individual is influenced by and influences the sociocultural milieu that contributes toward personhood and wholeness. This chapter describes the older person in later years and that individual's right to be a self-determining, contributing member of society.

Holistic theory, according to Smuts (1926), is based on the concept of man responding in a unique manner as an individual and as a total being. Man consists of millions of particles, such as cells, which are subsets of larger, more complex parts, such as organs. These particles function in such a way as to support the parts, and the parts, in turn, support the whole person. Mind and body are viewed as inseparable; whatever happens in one part affects the whole being.

The holistic perspective is based on a concept of wholeness that may be examined by studying the structure and functions of human beings (Levine, 1971) and the dynamics of their relationships with their environment. Whatever changes occur, the whole person responds (Bower, 1982) and attempts to reestablish a dynamic balance among the interdependent variables of person and environment.

An illustration that may be used in depicting a holistic perspective was developed by Byrne and Thompson (1978) (Fig. 1-1). Concentric rings were used for portraying the individual's subordinate systems (cell, organ, organ system) and superordinate systems (family, community, society). We

Fig. 1-1. Levels of behavioral organization.



From Byrne, M.L., and Thompson, L.F.: Key concepts for the study and practice of nursing, ed. 2, St. Louis, 1978, The C.V. Mosby Co.

suggest use of this diagram for conceptualizing the older adult holistically. This perspective may be further developed by studying the dynamics of human behavior and relationships within the sociocultural milieu. This is in keeping with the assertion of Byrne and Thompson that a person cannot be understood apart from his or her environment.

Whitehead (1964), in turn, asserted that the body is inseparable from the natural world—that the brain and the body are actually continuous with the rest of the world. This concept of wholeness is illustrated in the work of those studying therapeutic touch. Krieger (1979), for example, speaks of an energy field that extends beyond the physical boundary of the skin of the body and of therapeutic touch as a mode of human interaction. She refers to a space between persons that can be perceived as a natural extension of the self and that may be used both to increase self-understanding and, because of this understanding, to promote the well-being of others. The concept of the transfer of energy from one person to another relates to the concept of wholeness defined previously and to the systems theory that will be discussed later.

A Holistic View of Aging

A holistic view of aging calls for a philosophy of aging. This philosophy should encompass beliefs about the nature of the human being, the world in which he or she lives, and the aging process. The human being is an active, changing individual who becomes increasingly differentiated and unique over time. The older person, in turn, develops within and adapts to a continually changing, sociocultural, physical, psychological, and spiritual environment. In the holistic view, the older person is expected to share in a give-and-take relationship with his or her environment. This means that the older person should have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from resources that better the human condition.

Aging has been defined in various ways in the holistic perspective; it may best be viewed as the total of life experiences occurring in time. This broad definition encompasses changes in the person-environment context whatever the source or direction. Aging may be viewed as more than an either-or phenomenon of decremental or incremental nature; it can be viewed as a developmental process wherein constant change is multidimensional and multidirectional. The older person can learn new ways of relating to the self, to others, and to the world. He or she can continue to develop and to experience the joy that arises from relationships with others and the giving and receiving of affection.

A holistic philosophy of aging can be useful in combating "ageism," the tendency to discriminate against people on the basis of chronological age alone (Butler, 1969). Perhaps an indication of change in this attitude is

evidenced in the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States at the age of 69 and the implantation of a mechanical heart in 61-year-old Barney Clark, a retired dentist. Furthermore, the effect of elderly buyers on the market has recently been acknowledged ("Elderly buyers . . .," 1982). According to this report, 17.7 million family units have people 65 years of age or older as head. The elderly have already been acknowledged as an important segment of the voting population (approximately 16%), since they turn out to vote. Thus, there is some evidence of a developing attitude toward aging that takes into account the contribution older persons can make for the benefit of themselves and society.

A Holistic View of the Older Adult

A holistic view of the older adult may be achieved, in part, by giving attention to the dimensions of the individual. These dimensions—the physical, the psychological, the sociological, and the spiritual—will be examined further throughout the text. It is important that these dimensions be recognized as integral components of the whole person-environment milieu. If the older person reaches the point of needing assistance, helping persons should be mindful of the individual's right and responsibility to participate in problem-solving, decision-making processes in keeping with his or her state of well-being. Exercising the right of self-determination is essential to the person's sense of control over his or her destiny; it is also crucial to discharging social responsibility. No one lives in isolation; therefore individual and societal needs are important considerations within the holistic perspective.

Holistic Health

Demographics indicate that the oldest segment of society, people 80 years of age and above (Maddox, 1982), is the most rapidly increasing segment of the population throughout the world. These demographics reflect the increasing longevity, which in the United States is now 74 years. Since this older segment of the population is at risk for changes in health status, attention to the health needs of this population should be a priority within the holistic perspective.

Holistic health is a concept used to refer to the natural tendency toward self-healing (Jaffe, 1980). This integration of body, mind, and spirit (McKay, 1980) is achieved primarily by establishing a life-style that tends to promote a higher level of wellness (Ardell, 1977). Thus the locus of control for health is within the person who, in turn, is responsible to a great extent for his or her own state of well-being.

Benefits from a change in life-style can be experienced by older adults just as by younger persons. Achieving harmony among the various components of the individual necessitates attending to spiritual needs as well

as physical, psychological, and sociological needs. Defining a philosophy and purpose in life is essential to achieving the state of well-being wherein the affirmation of the person can be realized (Brallier, 1978).

Holistic Health Care

Holistic health care emerged as a popular ideology in the 1970s. People began to turn to preventive health care programs such as the Kaiser-Permanente in California and to implement personal behaviors, such as exercise, weight control, and the giving up of smoking, as a means of regaining a measure of control over their well-being. This shift of emphasis from illness care to preventive health care and health promotion seemed to stem from the realization that the medical system affects only about 10% of the indices used for health measurement (Wildavsky, 1977; McKeown, 1978). The other 90% are determined by factors such as individual life-style, social conditions, and the physical environment, which are more subject to the control of individuals and groups of individuals involved in policy-making activities.

Various approaches to holistic health care have been developed, including stress management, biofeedback, muscle relaxation, meditation, visualization or use of guided imagery, and positive thinking (Brallier, 1978). Whatever the method, the goal is to help the person achieve a greater degree of harmony between himself or herself and the natural world (Jaffe, 1980). The emphasis is on health promotion and self-care. Although research is needed to provide a scientific basis for holistic health methods, many people, older adults included, are learning to use and apparently benefit from various methods and techniques for promoting wellness and increasing their zest for life.

Holistic Nursing and the Older Adult

Holism encompasses a multidisciplinary approach because of the many dimensions and needs of the human being. Holistic nursing is based on the concept of the person as a developing individual who is constantly involved in the process of change (Schrock, 1980). The older adult is recognized as a survivor of many life changes, positive and negative. These events have influenced his or her perception of and response to the experiences of daily life. Thus, determining the person's perceptions is of primary importance in the holistic nursing of older adults.

Achieving and maintaining wholeness may be as much a goal of the older person as of the younger person (Jaffe, 1980). It is coming to be recognized as one of the major challenges for older persons. Whereas younger persons tend to experience their bodies intensely, older persons may become intensely interested in learning about their bodies and how to take care of them. Older adults may be highly motivated toward self-care,