

The Chinese University of Hong Kong The Nethersole School of Nursing

Cadenza Training Programme

CTP001: Successful Aging and Intergenerational Solidarity

Chapter 1: Aging from the Chinese Cultural Perspectives

Module II

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Lecture Outline

Ø An Overview of Chinese Culture

Ø Introduction of Chinese Culture

Ø Culture and Aging

Ø Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

Ø What is Filial Piety

Ø The Meaning of the Family in Chinese Culture

Ø The Position of the Older People in Family

Ø The Impact of Modernization

Ø Healthy Aging

Ø The Challenge of Healthy Aging

Ø Promotion for Healthy Aging



An Overview of Chinese Culture

An Overview of Chinese Culture

Introduction of Chinese Culture

Introduction of Chinese Culture

- China is one of the world's oldest and most complex cultures.
- The Culture of China is quite unique and special for thousands and thousands of years.
- Chinese Culture as a whole can clearly be divided into two:
 - Traditional Culture
 - Modern Culture

(Wikipedia, 2011a)



Introduction of Chinese Culture

- Before the mid-1900's, traditional Chinese culture was prominent as people and families lived by traditional values and beliefs as well as old teachings and ways of life.
- After the political change in 1949, a new culture developed as modern Chinese culture was developed. The ways of life of the Chinese people took on a whole new character as the traditional styles and ways were put behind.

(Wikipedia, 2011b)

Traditional Chinese Culture

- The word “culture” can refer to fields such as art, literature, music, beliefs, values, customs, language, a way of life, etc.



Traditional Chinese Culture

- Most social value are derived from
 - Confucianism (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism>)
 - Taoism (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism>)
- Concept of Guanxi
 - The basic dynamic in personalization networks of influence, central idea in Chinese society
 - The primacy of relationships over rules
 - not only describe the relationships within a family, but also the relationship that falls within other well-defined societal norms (e.g. boss-worker, teacher-student, friendship etc.)

Traditional Chinese Culture

- Life is subdivided into Five Relationships
 - **Father to Son** - There should be kindness in the father, and filial piety in the son.
 - **Elder Brother to Younger Brother** - There should be gentility (politeness) in the elder brother, and humility in the younger.
 - **Husband to Wife** - The husband should be benevolent, and the wife should listen.
 - **Elder to Junior** - There should be consideration among the elders and deference among the juniors.
 - **Ruler to Subject** - There should be benevolence among the rulers and loyalty among the subjects.

(Wikipedia, 2011d)

Traditional Chinese Culture

- Family life has always been extremely important to Chinese culture as Chinese lived in large family units.
- Chinese people observe the Confucian tradition of filial piety, a fundamental value system informing social life and relationships for all people, especially on the parent-child relationship.

An Overview of Chinese Culture

Culture and Aging

Culture and Aging

- Many cultures have different perceptions of their older people.
- Cultures differ in their beliefs on appropriate roles for the older people, how they handle the aging process, and their relationship with the older members of their society.
- Aging should be viewed as a cultural process instead of simple biological fact.

Culture and Aging

- The interactions of personality and culture in the experience of aging:
 - Develops access to natural resources, information, tools, technologies, coping patterns, institutions, and systems
 - Provides mutually supportive and need-satisfying forms of social interaction (socialization)
 - Defines the status, role, and functions of the individual in the light of the culture's values and priorities and enables the individual to experience a sense of personal worth and significance
 - Develops collective sources of meaning and purpose for life in which individuals can participate

Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

What is Filial Piety?

What is Filial Piety?

- In Confucian ideals, *filial piety* (*xiao* 孝) is one of the virtues to be held above all else: a respect for the parents and ancestors.
- 「百行孝為先」 declares a well known Chinese proverb.
- Xiao entails a complex series of duties of children to their parents.

(Wikipedia, 2011e)



What is Filial Piety?

- Filial piety basically describes the correct way to act towards one's parents.
- It is a kind of intergenerational relationship showing the caring behavior of offspring to their parents.

What is Filial Piety?

- Filial piety consists of several factors; the main ideas include loving one's parents, being respectful, polite, considerate, loyal, helpful, dutiful and obedient.



What is Filial Piety?

Confucius defined filial piety in terms of nine acts:

1. Taking care
2. Not being rebellious
3. Showing love, respect and support
4. Displaying courtesy
5. Continuing the family line
6. Withhold fraternity among siblings
7. Advising parents
8. Concealing parents' blunders
9. Displaying sorrow for parents' illness and death



(Lin, 1992)

Examples of Filial Piety

- Filial piety is considered the first virtue in Chinese culture, and it is the main concern of a large number of stories.
- One of the most famous collections of such stories is *The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars* (*Ershi-si xiao* 廿四孝).
- These stories depict how children exercised their filial piety in the past.

Examples of Filial Piety

Freezing in a Thin Coat in Obedience to his Stepmother

Min Tze-chien had lost his mother at a young age. His father remarried and had two more sons with his second wife. She always dressed her own sons in thickly padded robes. But to her stepson she gave only a thin coat padded with cattails (instead of cotton). One winter day, when Min Tzu-chien was told to hold the reins of his father's cart, he was shivering so badly that he dropped the reins. This way his father found out that his wife dressed his oldest son very poorly. In his rage he decided to dismiss his second wife. But Min Tze-chien said "If she stays, one son will be freezing. But if she leaves, all three sons will suffer from the cold." When his stepmother heard this, she changed her attitude towards Min Tzu-chien.

Examples of Filial Piety

Allowing Mosquitoes to Feast on his blood

During the Chin Dynasty (4th – 5th Century CE), a boy named Wu Meng was already serving his parents in exemplary filial piety although he was just eight years old. The family was so poor that they could not even afford a gauze net against the mosquitoes. Therefore every night in summer swarms of mosquitoes would come and bite them. Wu Meng let them all feast on his naked stomach. Even though there were so many, he did not drive them away. He feared that the mosquitoes, having left him, would instead bite his parents. His heart was truly filled with love for his parents.

Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

The Meaning of Family

The Meaning of the Family in Chinese Culture

- Understanding of aging in Chinese Society is closely tied to understanding of the Chinese family system.
- “Family” is a kind of mythical entity that has meaning far beyond economic and biological ties. It is the primary context of the meaning of life.

(Giskin, 2001)

The Meaning of the Family in Chinese Culture

- The family has been central to the social organization of Chinese Societies for thousands of years.
- The family is the basic entity of life, and the individual is defined by his or her place in the family and his or her contribution to the family's maintenance and advancement.

(Giskin, 2001)

The Meaning of the Family in Chinese Culture

- Family functions as a close-knit social unit from which its members draw on each other's resources for meeting psychological, social and physical needs.
- Traditionally, the most desirable living arrangement for Chinese families has been held to be the multigenerational household.
- Families play a major role in providing older people with informal care and support.

Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

The Position of Older People

The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese Family

- There is a saying in Chinese, ***“If you have a senior in the family, it’s like you have a treasure in the family.”*** 「家有一老如有
里藏犬



The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese Family

- Within the context of the family, the position of the older people was clearly defined and relatively secure.
- The ongoing life of the family was governed by the mutual obligations that family members had to each other.

The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese family

- The older members were expected to care for the younger ones until they could care for themselves.
- In turn, the younger members were expected to care for the older ones when they were in need of care, and all remained dependent upon the family to provide for their needs.

The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese Family

- “Filial piety” and “respect for elders” were learned in childhood.
- The role, status and authority of the elders were defined by the traditional family system.
- Confucian ideals bound children to obey and serve their parents.

(Giskin, 2001)

The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese Family

- The oldest family member was the head of the family, who made all decisions was respected and obeyed by all family members.
- No matter what decision was made concerning the family, it had to have the approval of this person.

(Giskin, 2001)

The Position of the Older People in Traditional Chinese Family

- Children were taught from the time they were very young to respect their older people.
- They could never disagree with oldest family member even if they knew he was wrong.
- Because they were raised in this atmosphere, no one ever thought of showing disrespect for their oldest family member.

Filial Piety and Aging in Chinese Society

The Impact of Modernization

The Impact of Modernization

- Like all other cultures of the world, the Chinese Culture is changing continually. Throughout history it has evolved and changed, especially during the 20th century.
- Modern society was characterized by individualism and emphasis on self-interest, exchanging and rational choice. Promoting the ideal property of filial piety was not easy and social capital was served to reduce rather than increase people's filial piety

(Ho, 1994)

The Impact of Modernization

- The increasingly modernized and individualized younger generations may not fulfill their caregiving tasks in the desirable manner
- Moreover, many societies have begun the epoch of postmaterialism and postmodernity, which emphasizes fulfillment of personal interest and expressivism and rejects traditional care and support for older people

(Ho, 1994)

The Impact of Modernization

- It is because people are likely to be pragmatic and opportunistic enough to capitalize on the benefit of community and government support
- As such, community and government support would displace rather than strengthen people's filial responsibility

(Ho, 1994)

Example of the Impact of Modernization

- For example, on the winter solstice day, all family members should go back to parents' home to have a big meal in the old days.
- Now, people are seldom dining at home for family gathering. They choose to go to a Chinese restaurant or even having an international buffet in a hotel instead. But the principle of getting family member together is the same.

(Hong Kong Fast Facts, 2011)

Filial Piety Concept among the young, adult and old in Chinese Cities

The Filial Piety Concept in Chinese Cities

- A research study from the City University of Hong Kong investigated the filial piety concept in seven different Chinese cities.
- Part of the study addresses filial piety in terms of people's endorsement to:
 1. Filial responsibility for parents and grandparents,
 2. Perception of expectation of filial support from children and grandchildren,
 3. Perception of filial piety practice by people in society,
 4. The practice of filial piety.

(Kwan, 2003)

The Filial Piety Concept in Chinese Cities

- Sample:
 - **5,512 Chinese people**, included 600 in Beijing, 685 in Guangzhou, 1,539 in Hong Kong, 600 in Nanjing, 888 in Shanghai, 600 in Xiamen and 600 in Xian.
- Roughly, equal proportions of respondents had ages between 15 - 29, 30 – 59, and 60 – 96.

(Kwan, 2003)

Results:

1. Chinese people's endorsement to filial piety to parents was very high (mean = 84.8, in a range of 0 – 100)
 - ∅ Filial responsibility was significantly contingent on the person's perception of his or her parents' material need.
 - ∅ One who was higher in education was lower in the filial responsibility.

Results:

2. Chinese people's endorsement to filial piety to grandparents was very high (mean = 82.1).
3. Chinese people's perceived expectation of children's filial piety was very high (mean = 83.1).
 - Ø People with lower education perceived greater expectation of children filial piety

Results:

4. Chinese people's perception about expectation of grandchildren's filial piety was rather high (mean = 76.4).
 - Ø The perceived filial expectation significantly declined with one's education.

(Kwan, 2003)

Results:

5. Chinese people's average filial piety practice was only at a moderate level (mean = 61.3).
 - Ø Filial piety practice was the highest in terms of respecting parents (mean = 75.2) and was the lowest in terms of financial assistance (mean = 38.6).
 - Ø Filial piety practice was higher in
 - ü Mid-age people
 - ü Married people
 - ü Females

(Kwan, 2003)

Implications of the Study

- Filial piety in terms of filial responsibility and filial expectation is very high among Chinese people.
- However, filial piety in practice was only at a modest level. Thus, there is room for promoting filial piety in Chinese people.

(Kwan, 2003)

Implications of the Study

- Filial piety practice reduces people's need for community and government support. Thus, promoting filial piety practice would relieve burden on government and community in supporting the older population.

(Kwan, 2003)

Implications of the Study

- However, promoting filial piety might be difficult and unjustifiable in view of its conflict with modernization.
- Findings clearly indicate that people with higher education are less supportive of filial piety. Thus, filial piety tends to be at odds with values and practices induced by modern education.

(Kwan, 2003)

Implications of the Study

- Chinese people show very high endorsement and expectation of filial piety because they conform to the norm of filial piety. Nevertheless, the high filial responsibility does not translate to high practice in filial piety. Thus, much effort is necessary to boost up people's practice of filial piety.

(Kwan, 2003)

The Meaning and Practice of Filial Piety in Hong Kong

The Meaning and Practice of Filial Piety in Hong Kong

- A qualitative study was carried out to investigate the change in the meaning and practice of filial piety in Hong Kong.
- Sample:
 - 44 people from 27 Chinese families
 - be representative of both working and middle class families and balance to capture different family roles and family relationship

Evolution of the Meaning and Practice of Filial Piety

- (1) Finding:
 - In the past, filial piety was defined as children's obligation to parents and absolute respect for parental authority.
 - These elements remain relevant but the level of their importance has declined.
 - Young generation prefers to treat parents as equals and values open communication.

(Kwok, 2009)

Discrepancy of the Concept

- (2) Finding
 - The discrepancy in filial practice between the younger and older generation is obvious.
 - The differences are attributed to social change, which is irresistible and irreversible.
 - The older generation has generally managed to adjust their expectations.

(Kwok, 2009)

Change of the Practice of Filial Piety

- (3) Finding
 - Devotion to work and living apart from parents are the reasons most commonly cited by young people for finding it difficult to express their love and to care for their parents.
 - Both parents and adult children consider their living in the same neighborhood to be a viable solution to maintain contact and mutual support.

(Kwok, 2009)

Change of the Practice of Filial Piety

- (4) Finding
 - Many adult children in their early 30s are still being cared by their parents or parents-in-law as parents are still quite active.
 - Child care is recognized as one key area in which parents can make a contribution by playing an advisory role.

(Kwok, 2009)

Change of the Practice of Filial Piety

- (5) Finding
 - Older parents are fully aware that their adult children may not be able to look after them as the health of the former deteriorates.
 - An old aged home is an acceptable option for their future.
 - Most prefer home care with the aid of domestic helper.

Healthy Aging

The Concept of Healthy Aging

The concept of healthy aging was first defined by the WHO. Aging as a lifelong process and focuses on improving the wellbeing of people as they age.

Healthy aging can be viewed as the optimization of functional capacity within the constraints of normal age-related physiological, psychological and sociological changes.

(SH Ho Centre for Gerontology and Geriatric, CUHK, 2011)

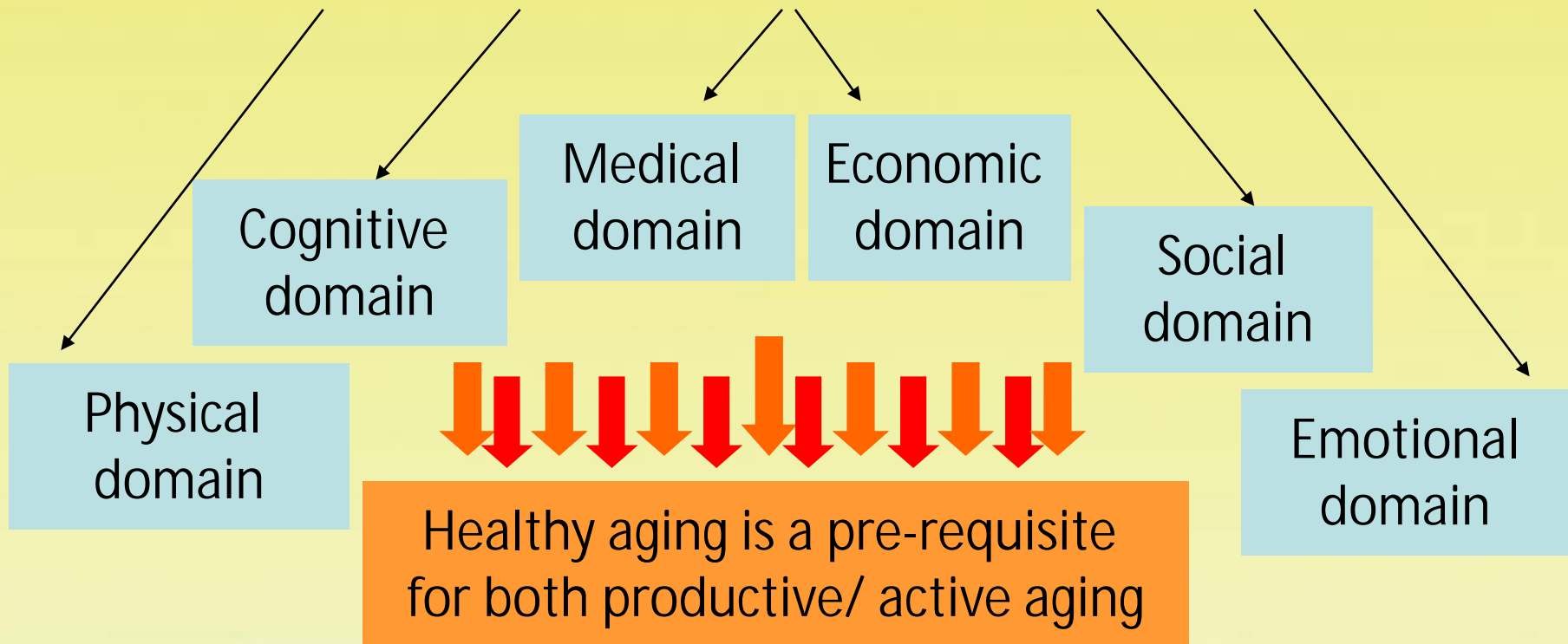
Definition of “Healthy Aging”

Health Aging may be defined as the absence of chronic disease, disability or impairment, and achievement of psychological well-being. Its components cover social aspects (adequate finances, good social support network), prevention of diseases (cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, dementia, depression), and prevention of functional decline.

(Woo & Tang, 2004).

Healthy Aging

Stress the **capacity** of older people to function across different domains



(Clark, 2007; O'Shea, 2006; Yaari & Goldbourt, 1998)

The Challenge of Aging Population in Hong Kong

- Like other advanced economies, Hong Kong has a gradually aging population.
- As post-war "baby-boomers" approach retirement age, population in Hong Kong aged 65 or above is expected to surge from about 900,000 in 2010 to 2.1 million by 2030.
- In view of the longevity of older people in Hong Kong, it is norm to live well in to the 70s and 80s.

Life Expectancy

- Hong Kong people have a very long life expectancy. In 2009, the expectancy of life at birth for:
 - Men: 79.8 years
 - Women: 86.1 years
- Figures represented an increase of some 9 years compared with 30 years ago.
- The life expectancy in Hong Kong is comparable to that of many advanced countries like Japan.

Life Expectancy

Table A : Life Expectancy at Birth in Hong Kong and Selected Countries

表 A : 香港及選定國家的人口出生時的平均預期壽命

Country國家 / Territory地區	Life Expectancy at Birth (years) 出生時的平均預期壽命 (年歲)	
	Male 男性	Female 女性
Hong Kong 香港	79.4 (2007)	85.5 (2007)
Japan 日本	79.2 (2007)	86.0 (2007)
Singapore 新加坡	78.1 (2007)	82.9 (2007)
UK 英國	77.4 (2007)	81.6 (2007)
USA 美國	75.4 (2007)	80.4 (2007)

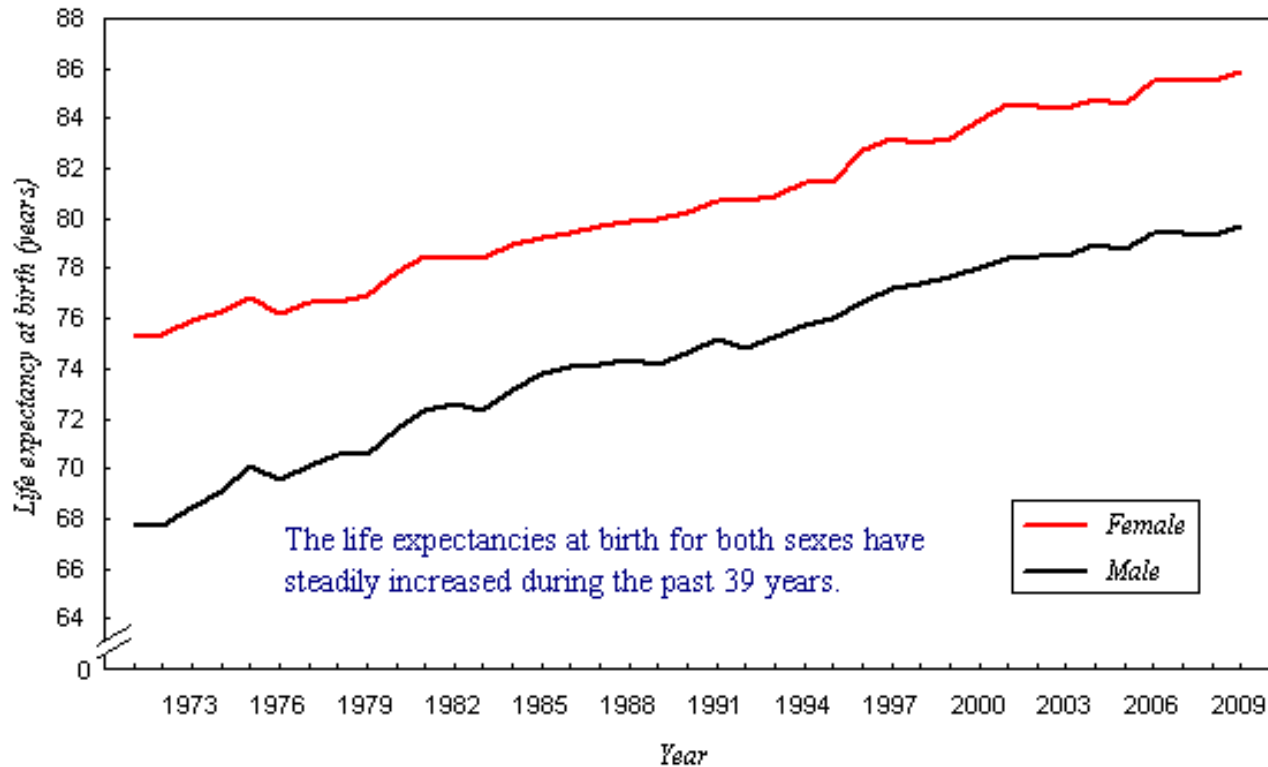
Note: Figure in brackets denotes the reference year of the respective figure.

註：括弧內的數字代表個別數字的參照年份。

(Department of Health Annual Report, 2007/2008)

Life Expectancy at Birth

Life Expectancy at Birth (Male and Female), 1971 - 2009



In 2009, the expectation of life at birth (provisional) was 79.8 years for males and 86.1 years for females in Hong Kong

Aging population and extended life expectancy in Hong Kong

港人平均壽命世界第二 女86.1歲男79.8歲

【字號】大 中 小

【大紀元4月1日訊】(據中廣新聞報導)香港政府統計處最新數字顯示，香港人壽命女性平均86.1歲，男性平均79.8歲，兩者都被列為世界長壽榜第二位。以此計算，20年後香港人口會有1/4是老人。

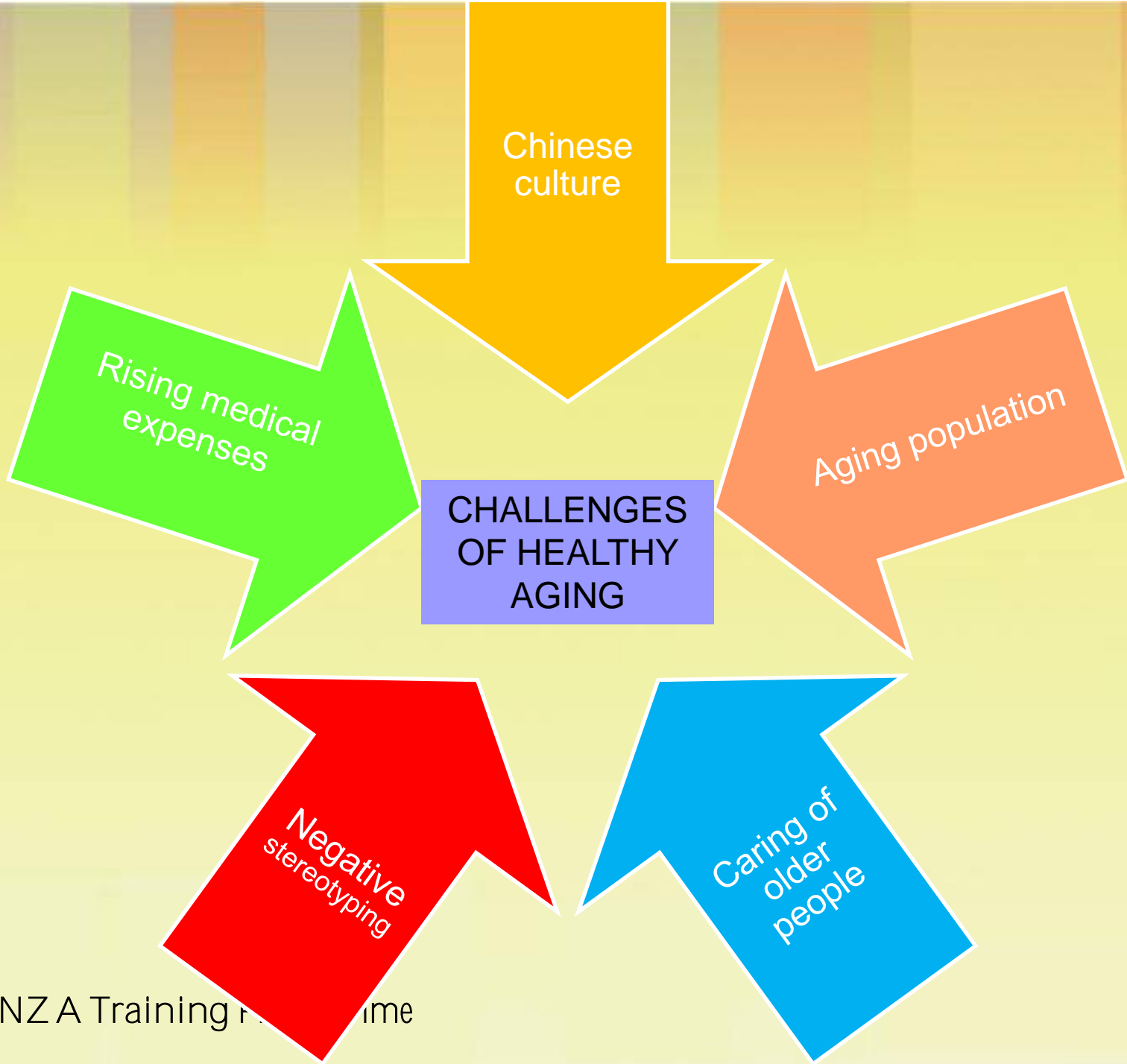
統計處分析指出，去年香港男性平均壽命為79.8歲，比5年前多了1歲，香港女性平均86.1歲，比5年前多了1歲半。如果與聯合國去年底公佈的全球人口壽命資料比較，香港無論男女，都是世界上第二長命的地區。目前，最長壽的男性在冰島，平均80.4歲；最長壽的女性在日本，平均86.5歲。

31.3.2010

<http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/10/4/1/n2863293.htm>

Healthy Aging

The Challenge of Healthy Aging



The Challenge of Aging Population in Hong Kong

- In view of the aging population and longevity, healthy aging is an important agenda for older population.
- How we can help older people to achieve healthy aging becomes a great challenge.

The Challenge of Chinese Culture

- As discussed in the previous slides, the evolution of both Chinese culture and filial piety construct an influencing environment to aging.
- Aging and culture should be considered while promotion of healthy aging.

Rising Medical Expenses

- Aging will put pressure on public finances, particularly as a result of rising health care costs.
- The major causes for morbidity and mortality among the older people are non-communicable diseases.
- Over 70% of the older people (aged 60 or above) reported to have chronic diseases.

(Census and Statistic Department, 2009)

Rising Medical Expenses

- It should be expected to have a rapid growth in medical expenditure in the next three decades.
- Chronic disease will cause limitation in functional ability which in turn affects one's independence and autonomy.
- Hence, promotion of health among older people can help to decrease medical expenses if they can maintain in good health condition.

Caring of Older People

- Filial piety does not appear to be a consensual norm in Hong Kong.
- Although Hong Kong people endorse filial piety to a moderately high extent, it is not overwhelming high.
- The primary source of filial piety among Hong Kong people is family cohesion.
- Older people are fully aware that their adult children may not be able to take care of them when they are increasing frailty.

Caring of Older people

- Empathy with aging parents rather than calculation regarding personal interest appears to be a determinant of filial piety.
- Utilitarian or instrumental concern is not a dominant factor affecting Hong Kong people's filial piety.
- Filial piety is an issue in Hong Kong in view of stress on offsprings who provide care to their aging parents.

Negative Stereotyping

- Negative stereotyping about older people is also prevalent in Hong Kong.
- The virtue of respecting the older people, as a facet of traditional Chinese normative order, is facing challenges from rapid social changes.
- Negative stereotyping implicated negative prejudice and burdensome social labelling which will influence the promotion of healthy aging in the society.

Promotion for Healthy Aging



Promotion for Health Aging

- In view of the challenges of aging in Hong Kong, it is important to promote healthy aging among our aging population.
- Health is a major concern of older people.
- Health promotion has a fundamental part to play in assisting older people with chronic disabilities to develop a state of adjusted independence.
- Health promotion activities may have the potential to save lives, delay institutionalization, reduce the burden on their families and improve life satisfaction.

(Chi, 1998)

Benefit of Healthy Aging

- Promoting healthy aging can benefit both society and individuals:
 - More the independence of older people, the better the intergenerational relationship
 - Promote the harmonious family relationship
 - Maintain older people in good health who can be a great resource to make contribution to society and family
 - Delay the onset of the diseases and disabilities and provide greater opportunity to participate in social life

Benefit of Healthy Aging

- Add year of life beyond the retirement age with more years in good health
- Bring choice of spending longer in paid work
- Bring more opportunities for engaging with their families and more years of independence in their own homes
- Reduce cost and other pressure on the health and aged care systems as more years spending in good health at an older age

(Prime Minister's Science, Engineering And Innovation Council)

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Filial piety does not seem to be vital in our modern society.
- It seems that individualism and the breakdown of the virtuous nature of filial piety are the price needed for modernization.
- Hong Kong is facing different challenges in aging population.
- Promotion of health and psychological well-being is important in healthy aging.



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