

Understanding Aging: East & West

**Spanda Yoga Movement Therapy
Training
Dr. Carrie Demers, MD**

What's up with Aging?



EXPECTATIONS surrounding aging in modern society: Grim...

Weakened body

Lack of energy

No purpose or inspiration

Mental deterioration

Need for prescriptions for chronic illnesses

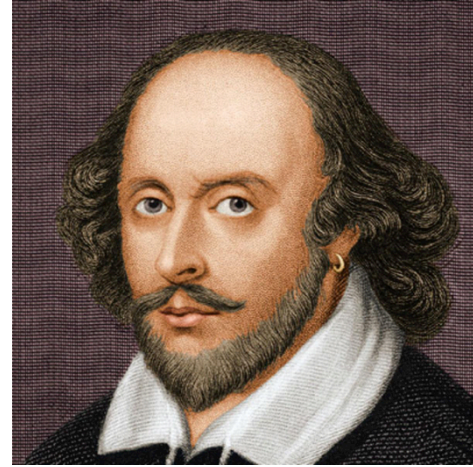
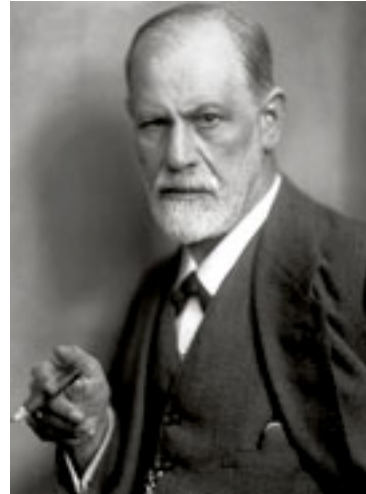
Anxiety and depression

Dependency; loss of autonomy

How We Got Here. . .

A few popular influences on aging stereotypes:

1. Shakespeare
2. Sigmund Freud
3. Social Security-
“retirement”



Aging Well

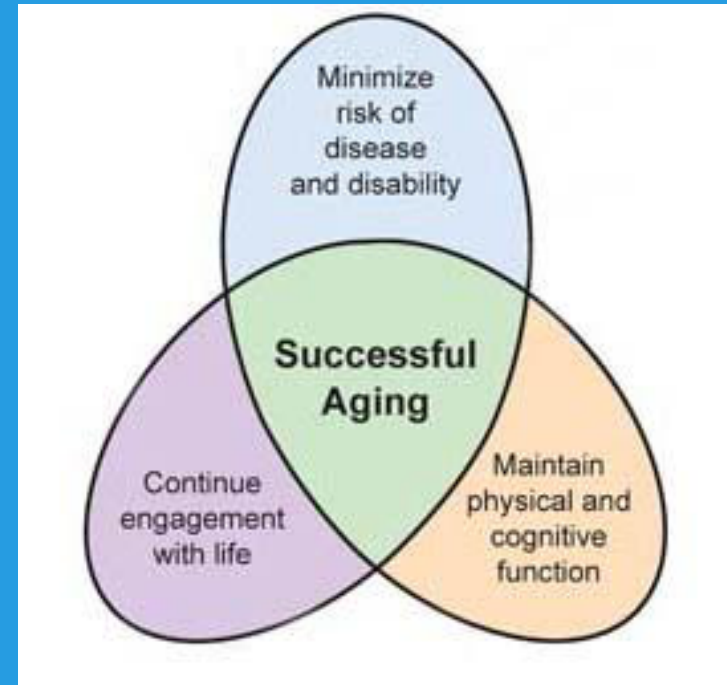
More and more mature adults are experiencing their later years with physical wellness, more energy, and clear minds.

Examples: Betty White, Noam Chomsky, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Elements of aging with “**success**”:

- Staying active and fit, able in the body.
- Clear in the mind.
- Living life with purpose!



= Successful Aging!

Why We Age (Modern View)

In the world of science, we age because of tissue breakdown. With age there comes a decrease in digestive ability to absorb nutrients, ability to eradicate free radicals, and ability to reproduce its own cells with integrity:

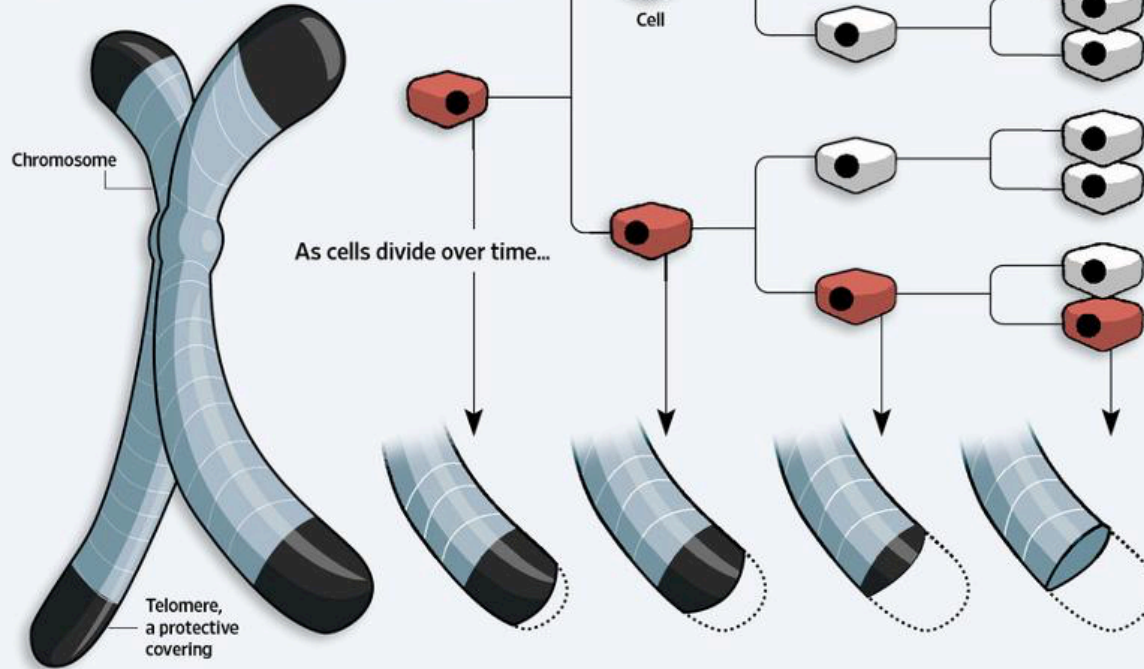


Aging symptoms are the result of many factors: genetics, life experience, tissue damage from inflammation and oxidative stress, along with telomere shortening.

Telomere Length

What We Lose With Age

As we grow older, telomeres at the end of our chromosomes shrink. New research suggests major depression also is linked to shorter telomeres, a sign of 'accelerated aging.'

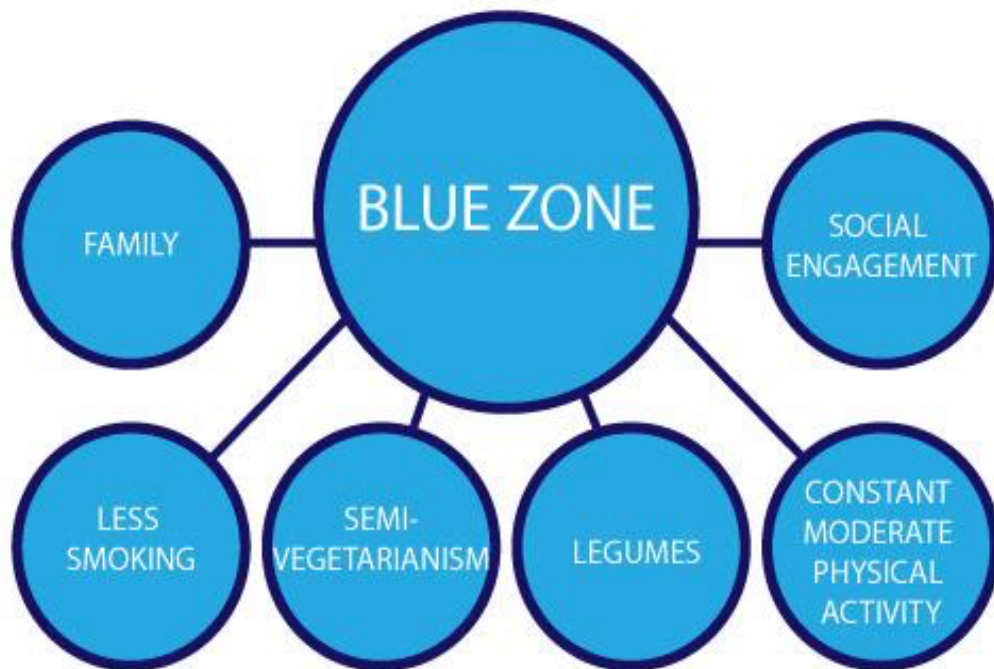


BLUE ZONES – Dan Buettner research



**Blue Zone
Countries
World Map**

Blue Zone: a concept used to identify a demographic and/or geographic area of the world where people live measurably longer lives.



Okinawa, Japan

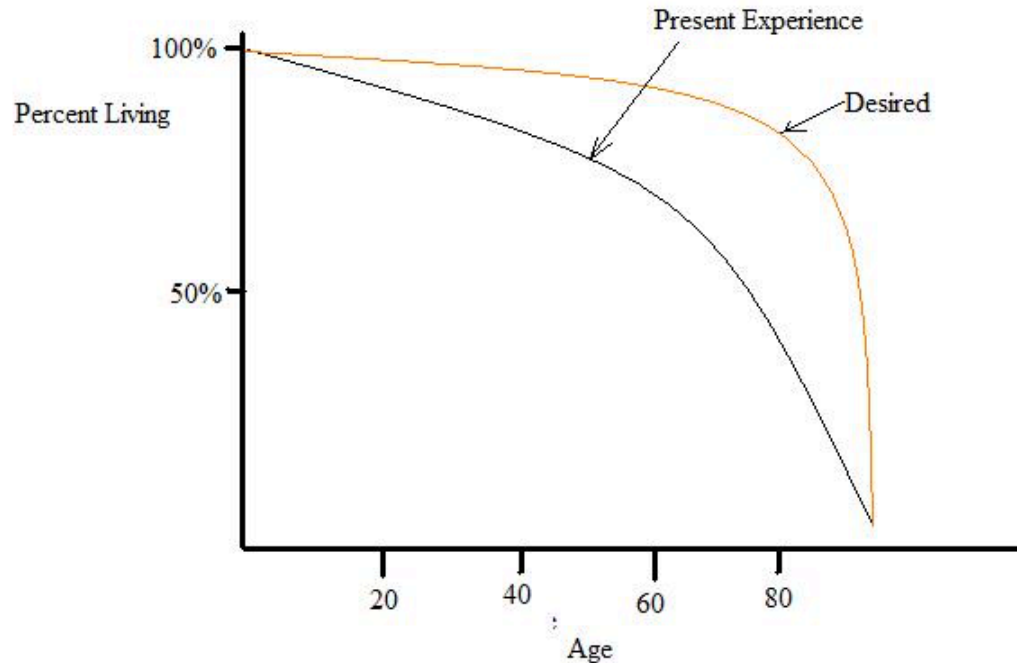
Sardinia, Italy

Loma Linda, US

Nicoya, Costa Rica

Icaria, Greece

Compression of Morbidity



What helps us maintain health and achieve successful aging?

- Diet
- Exercise
- Beliefs
- Community / Love
- Less Stress



Yields Successful Aging!!

Now: the Ancient View:



Eastern Philosophy:

- Vedic Times
 - around 2500 BCE
- Indus Valley in India
- Highly evolved culture
- Origin of Vedas, some of the oldest known writings
- Spiritually focused

Four Stages of Life:





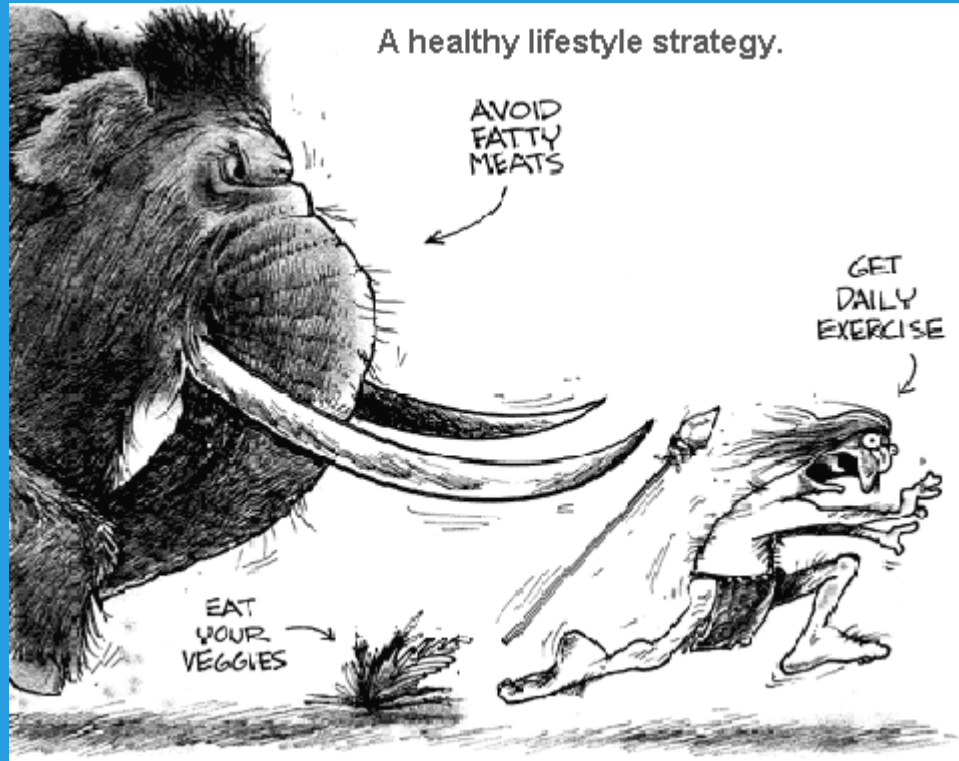
Stages of Life:

- **1st: Student** age 0 - 25 years
 - Learn and grow personally, through experiences.
- **2nd: Householder** age 25-50
 - Create and support family, while fulfilling one's worldly interests and duties.
- **3rd: Forrest Dweller** age 50-75
 - Take that learning and focus inward; learn about your Self.
- **4th: Renunciate/Sage** age 75-100
 - Serve, practice, and teach in community.

Forest Dwellers?



- A time of life to redirect our focus from outside to inside
- A time of exploration
- A time of challenge and discovery



This ancient philosophy was engaged in a new process of discovery that was intriguing, challenging and ultimately gave them confidence and joy.

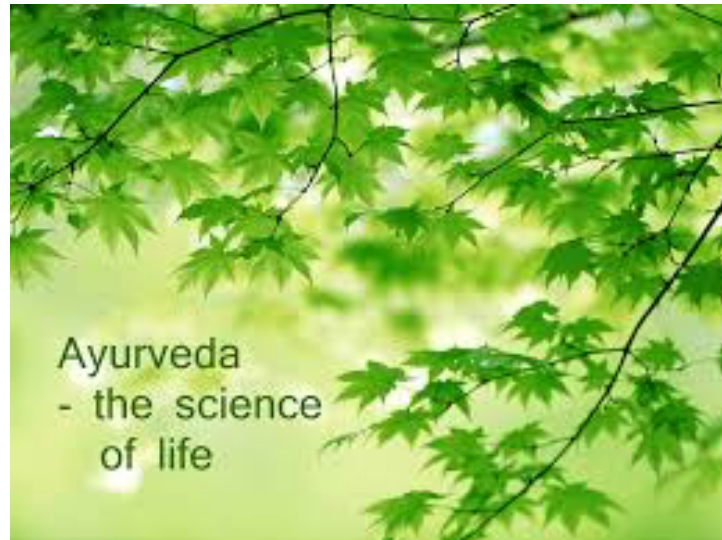
Not focused on running from the jaws of death and aging.

Ancient and Civilized

Why We Age (Ancient View)

Vedic Medical System

Ayurveda. . .
What is it?



Five Great Elements

The Pancha Maha Bhutas

- ❖ **Space:** expansive, cold, dry; potentiality for all things (In the Beginning...)
- ❖ **Air:** changeable, in motion, light, dry, cool; unstable
- ❖ **Fire:** hot, intense, sharp, aggressive; transformative
- ❖ **Water:** cool, mobile, moist; adaptable
- ❖ **Earth:** stable, cool, dense, heavy; unmoving



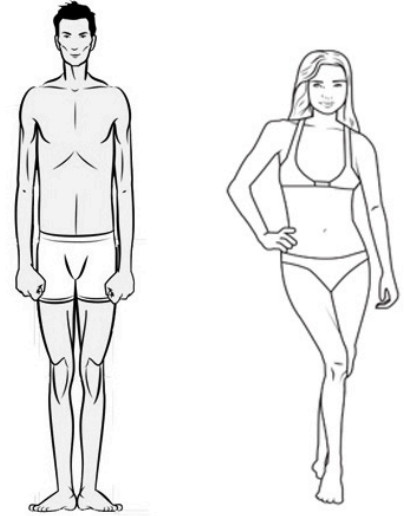
The Three Doshas

The five elements condense into three doshas:

- ❖ **Vata** = Air + Space
- ❖ **Pitta** = Fire (+ Water)
- ❖ **Kapha** = Water + Earth

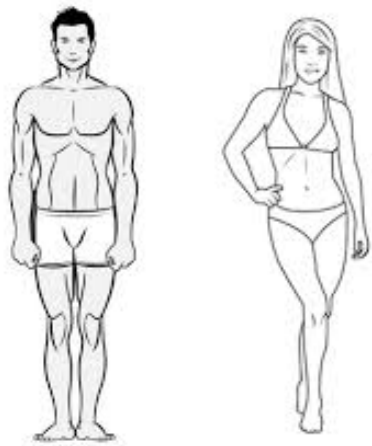


VATA= Air + Space



Tall / Thin

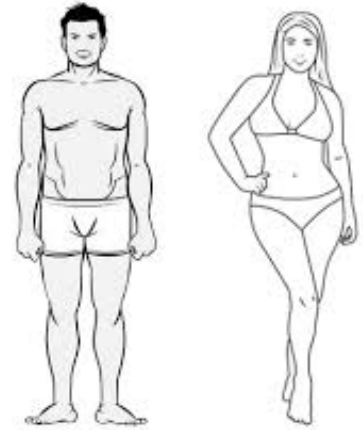
Medium / Athletic



PITTA = Fire + Water

Kapha = Water + Earth

Larger Frame



Curvy

Typical “Natural” Progression

We are born Kapha: full of water and the ability to grow



Our middle years are governed by Pitta as we strive to do our duty (and get the bills paid!)



Aging = Vata Rising

Typical Symptoms:

Drying out process- skin, joints, muscles, eardrums, eyes, bones, gums, and loss of cohesiveness.

Coldness

Incontinence, hernias, aneurysm

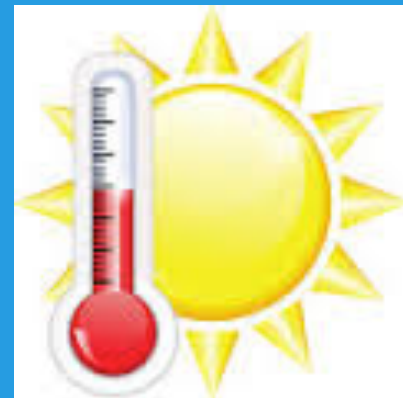
Dementia (think unraveling).



Pacifying Vata

Give the Opposite

What helps us maintain health as we age?



Warmth

Moisture



Relax!!!!!!

Less Stress, More Nurturance



'You need to go home, take a long relaxing bath surrounded by aromatic candles and do an hour of yoga; but that's out of the question. How about a five minute smoking break?'



Routine

We ALL need a schedule of basic supports:

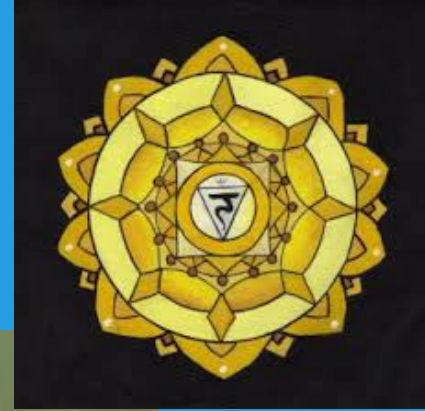
- ❖ Sleep
- ❖ Meals
- ❖ Exercise
- ❖ Relaxation
- ❖ Massage
- ❖ Socializing





Eat good food to support function of all tissues

The Importance of Digestion



Digestion and Aging

Modern Vs. Ancient

Both modern and ancient views recommend:

- ❖ Healthy Diet
- ❖ Exercise
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Purpose



Vedic society stresses routine that syncs with nature, mindfulness, and connection to spiritual self.