

Module 3 Lesson 3

Transcript

Today we're talking aging and brain health, something that applies to all of us and is a good thing. Today we're going to lay the foundation for understanding how our bodies change as we get older. We're going to talk about the specific changes that happen to our hearts, bones, muscles, joints, GI tract, brain and skin, as we age. How and why weight changes with age, something you need to have a really good understanding of if you're working with clients. And yep, we're even going to talk a little bit about sex, and how aging affects our sex lives too.

I'm quite obsessed with both my kids, of course, but I'm talking girls for a minute, so I'm focusing on Maizy for a second. I've seen it with her and all of her friends, that time of life when their amazing bodies change, in both awkward and really incredible ways. I've seen her friends and girls her age, in less than a year, live in completely different bodies, all thanks to, puberty. My point is, that in just a year or two, an evolution takes place inside our girls and they shuck their childhood. Then, we know, they may keep changing a few more years until they settle into their adult body. Then their adult bodies aren't really ever finished. We're never finished. It's not like hormones just stop working. It's an evolution throughout our entire lives, which is something that if you work with clients, you really want to remember and remind them of, even though they might not be going through menopause, which we're going to get to in a little bit, their bodies are still changing. They're not going to be exactly the same way they were when they were 12 or 18.

Sure, changes also happen in boys too, but one big difference is that boys have testosterone, which makes them stronger and faster, whereas more than 50% of adolescent girls who were involved in sports, this makes me so sad, and athletics, that they absolutely loved, they drop out at this age. In part, because of this puberty stage, when we develop, our bodies aren't fueled by the hormones that improve performance, like testosterone, and they have to adapt to hips that might make them slower and sometimes breasts that require just adjusting to. Here, in adolescence, female athletes have to learn to be patient, keep training and push through plateaus because it's physiologically harder for girls than it is for boys. And that's not sexist, it's just science. We have to coach our girls through this. If you're working with this age group, you really need to be aware of this and be mindful of it, and coach them through this. Teach them to accept what is coming and not let them give up or take it as a personal failure. Remember, part of what we do is cheerlead, and also raise awareness. This is a time you might want to raise some awareness.

So, there are obvious jumps and growth those first few years of life, and then again at puberty. But really, I want to go back to this notion that we never stop changing, we're constantly

evolving. There's a ladder we're climbing in life and the stages are really, really subtle. I see women at 30, who are trying to get pregnant and not even thinking about menopause, as they shouldn't be. And those same women though, just six years later, are considered high-risk for pregnancy because of their age, and yet still, not anywhere close to thinking about menopause. Aging is gradual and there's nuance and commonalities among all of us as we progress up this ladder of life. I would love to have a quarter for every time I hear, "I used to be able to eat whatever I wanted", or "I could drop 10 pounds in a month. What's happened?"

Our bods, we're living in, just don't stay the same. It's just life. People often though, have a hard time understanding that. There's no wizard who's going to say, "Stop here, she's at a perfect place in weight, right in this moment." Let's go deeper here and talk now about what goes on in your major body systems and parts, why they happen and things you should be thinking about in older populations that you might work with. So let's start with your ticker, the heart and cardiovascular system. As we celebrate birthdays, that can't support all those candles on your cake anymore because there's too many candles, the cardiovascular system is going to see stiffening of the blood vessels and arteries, which makes your heart work harder to pump blood through them. So just like your skin loses elasticity, so do your arteries. The heart muscles are going to change to compensate for this increased workload.

This might be review for some of you, but also, this is really good information for you to share with your clients and talk to them about, so they have a basic understanding of what's happening. Your heart rate, at rest, may stay about the same, but it won't increase during exertional activities as much as it used to. These changes up your risk of high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems, so all the more reason to exercise, eat healthfully and manage your stress and sleep hygiene, those things make a difference.

Then we have your bones, muscles and joints. You store all the calcium you're going to store in your bones by your third decade of life. After that, calcium is taken from the bones and used in the blood for a whole host of reasons. Something I tell my clients that really resonates is that your blood always wins. So, if you're not consuming enough calcium in your diet, your blood is going to take calcium from your bones, and one of the reasons it's so important to continue to consume enough calcium. As we age, bones will shrink in size and density, it's just part of aging, which will weaken them and make them more susceptible to fracture.

You definitely have a relative who has shrunk a couple of inches. Unless you're really working hard to maintain them, muscles generally also lose strength, endurance and flexibility. And then that can affect coordination, stability and balance, which is one of the main reasons we hear so

often of elderly people falling and breaking a hip or a knee. Again, weight bearing exercises are clutch in preventing losses in muscles and bones. A little extra calcium and vitamin D may be helpful so they aren't pulled from your bones, especially if deficiencies are there. We have handouts attached to this lesson that will cover more details on exercise and exactly how much calcium and vitamin D you'll want to recommend your clients consume. One thing I'll note here, I always promote to an older population walking, with the goal of making it to an hour a day. Some people can only do five minutes in the beginning. Encourage your clients, work with them, coach them, building up just a couple minutes a day is actually really meaningful.

And of course, the good old GI track isn't impervious to aging either. As we age, we may have dramatic changes in our appetites. They can be from taste bud changes, digestion issues or stem from social issues. There are actually structural changes that go on in the large intestine, leading to constipation in many elderly people. You may also find that older adults don't drink enough fluids or eat enough fiber or fruits or vegetables. And then, there are medications, such as diuretics and iron supplements and certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, that also may contribute to constipation, all things you need to consider and be aware of when you're working with this population. Here, just like when you potty train a toddler, we remind people to use the bathroom when they feel the urge, and sit patiently for a while. Sounds really simple, but sometimes you need to remind people to do this and it can have a dramatic effect on someone's life. Eating healthfully with lots of fiber and fluids and getting a good walk in daily are really important. Don't minimize these important factors. We spend other lessons on the brain, so I'm not going to get into it much here, but I just want to mention that brain exercises, like crossword puzzles and math games and reading and music are really helpful in keeping the brain sharp and young. You can even put that into a lifestyle plan for people.

Okay, so do we even want to talk about skin? It can be the biggest giveaway to our age, despite all the money and all the treatments and all the time we spend on beauty products and skincare essentials. Our skin is one organ that seems to just steadily decline with every single year of life. I want you to check out the handout attached here for the best foods for skin, for all different kinds of skin conditions, that you can share with your clients. Okay, wait, we had to get to wait. You're probably thinking, "Oh, I know I'm going to gain weight as I age" or "I've gained weight, oh, but I've gotten older." I've got a client in her 70s who weighs the same as she did on her wedding day, almost 50 years earlier. There are a good number of people out there who don't put on the pounds after menopause. Gaining weight is not inevitable.

There is research though, not to your surprise probably, that says how your body burns calories and your metabolic functioning does slow down as you age. Also, that same client who is 70,

and still at that same wedding weight, she's still not in the same body. Things have still changed, right? Her waist is thicker, her breasts are smaller and her legs are thinner than her 20 year old self. As her hormones changed, so did her body shape and size. Weight isn't everything. We can attribute a lot of that to genetics, yes. But she really did do hard work with her food and exercise to maintain her weight. That's one of the reasons it's not inevitable to gain weight even with the metabolic changes. If you decrease activities as you age, but continue to eat the same as usual, you're going to gain weight. Exercise and a really healthy diet are super important to keep the scale where you want. It might not be a surprise, but many people don't even realize that they're starting to scale back on activity and the food hasn't changed, or maybe they're even starting to eat more. They've got more free time on their hands.

Keep in mind also, and remind your clients, that the scale may not be the best indicator of your client's health. It's usually not, and so many clients hang onto that number. It's our jobs to remind them that it might not be the best indicator for them for their health. Loads of research says that elderly people with a few extra pounds on them have better health outcomes than leaner elderly peeps, and BMI is not the best tool. So, focus your attention on all of the good behaviors and amazing outcomes will follow.

Finally, I'm taking a second to talk sex. I know that lots of us cringe when we have conversations about what's going on between the sheets, but it's really important to remember that sexual health is a part of your wellness profile. This is all a part of the love more pillar, which is why the love more pillar is included in your client intake form from TNS level one. It's so vital to living a nutritious life. As we age, sexual needs and performance might change, it happens. Illness or medication might really impact your ability to enjoy sex or it might change your sex drive. Don't forget to ask those love more questions when appropriate.

These are some of the nitty gritty changes with aging that we see. Let's just quickly review the major points. Our arteries and vessels stiffen, which means our hearts need to work harder. Bones will weaken by shrinking in size and density. Muscles lose strength. We may experience memory loss. Skin becomes less elastic and more fragile. Appetites change and our ability to absorb some nutrients decreases. We may gain weight if we don't adapt our diets and exercise. Sexual needs and performance might also change.

So what does this all mean for you? You'll definitely see clients who are super, super frustrated by all of these changes that go hand in hand with aging. Some people get depressed about it, that's another thing that can happen with aging. Work with them on adapting to these changes and on making healthy lifestyle shifts to support aging in the most healthful possible, and getting

ahead of it is also important too, which is all part of the prevention of nutrition. There are some things we just can't avoid, of course, but there are many, many changes, such as weight gain, that can be avoided or lessened with your lifestyle guidance. I hope you enjoyed this lesson and I am so excited to see you in the next one.