



The Silver Tsunami

Aging & Addiction in America

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Agenda

- Impact of the Baby Boomer Generation
- Age Phobia in America
- What is Pro-Aging?
- Soaring Rates of Addiction for Older Adults
- Myth Busting
- How many blue pills or was it the green pills?
- BoomerPlus+ Treatment & Recovery Model
- Q&A

Fifty Shades of Gray

Every seven seconds a Baby Boomer turns 50.

By 2023, one in five Americans will be over the age of 65.

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The Silver Tsunami

The demographic bulge known as the “shock wave” consists of those born between 1945 and 1964.

Seventy-eight million Baby Boomers have changed the course of equal rights and social empowerment for women and minorities around the world.

Boomers have been in the forefront of social, political and environmental changes.

Houston WE Have a Problem...



Boomers are also known as the generation looking for “quick fixes” and “better living through better chemistry.”



Aging boomers are more prone to treat their anxiety, depression and chronic pain through alcohol, pharmaceuticals and other mood-altering methods.



The Baby Boomer Generation are also in massive denial about aging. Our American culture is filled with intense age phobia. We are obsessed with finding out ways to look and try to remain young forever.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our denial and fear of aging and the outside fixes we seek.

You're Old. I'm Not.

- ❖ In a survey by Pew Research Center most people said: “old age began at age 68.”
- ❖ But those who were 65 thought “old age began at 74.”
- ❖ In a recent AARP survey with 1800 Americans; 85% of respondents told us they were NOT OLD YET. One ninety year-old woman reported she won't be old until she hits 95.



So WHO is Old?

It just depends who you ask.

And it's wherever YOU haven't gotten to yet!

Five Gifts *of Pro-Aging*

*Honoring Maturity in a
Culture That Could Use It*



Marcia Newman

A bit of my story...

As each silver hair multiplied, I had to face each trashy belief and judgment that I held inside... In truth, it felt as if my psyche had tapped into a collective unconscious database of our entire age-discriminating society.

Remarkably, a wise inner voice prevailed. It brought me this loving, gentle and consistent message:

“Just let yourself be. Let your hair and your life follow its course.”

And so I did, I freed my hair and the rest of the story follows.

A Hypothesis:

Untreated age phobia produces increased anxiety and can lead to substance misuse and addiction.

- Many 50+ adults are increasingly turning to external measures to try and turn-back-the clock including more consumption of alcohol and medications in order to mask their pain.
- Age Phobia needs to be recognized as a harmful body-mind condition. As with other phobias, it is treatable.
- Alcohol and drug studies combined with age acceptance scales are lacking and under studied.
- Overall, treatment needs and specialized programs for the 50+ population have been historically underestimated and understudied.

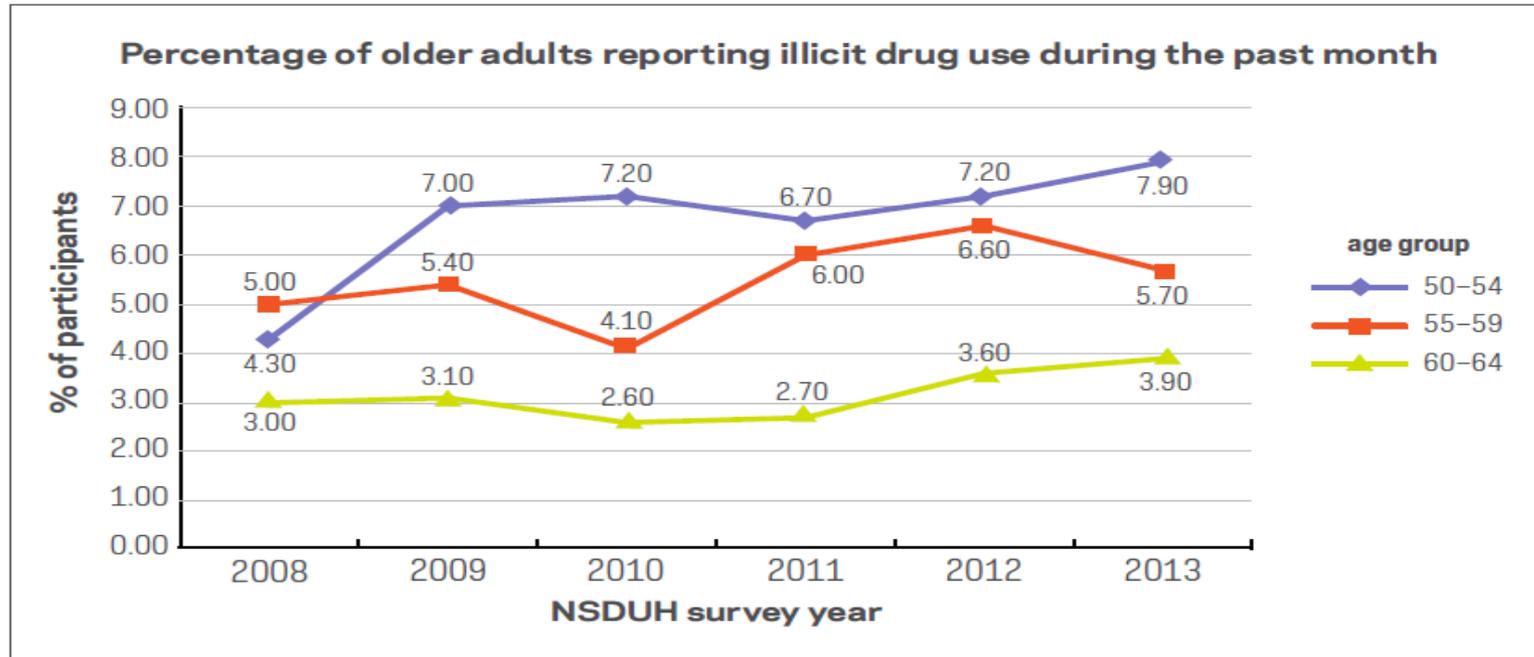
What is Pro-Aging?

- A fresh response to an anti-aging culture.
- Confronting prolific social stigmas about growing older, especially the message that women are valued as long as we remain youthful looking.
- Choosing new revolutionary roles for healthy maturity.
- Being involved in ongoing collaborative endeavors that make a meaningful difference on this planet.



*When you teach your daughter,
You teach your daughter's daughter.*
the Talmud

Butler Center for Research - March 2015 update



Illicit drug use being defined as using cocaine, marijuana, hallucinogens, inhalants, and prescribed therapeutic drugs used non-medically at least once during the month prior to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) survey. (SAMHSA, 2014).

Patients aged 50-54 had the highest rate of recent illicit drug use.

While illicit drug use has generally increased over time (2008 – 2013) for all three age groups over 50.

Impact of Drug use among Older Adults

Even though illicit drug use among adults aged 50 and over is still much lower than younger age groups , substance abuse poses a serious threat to the lives and well-being of older adults.

These are the main reasons.

- 
- As we age, our bodies absorb, metabolize, distribute and eliminate drugs differently when we were younger. Even small daily doses of alcohol, cigarettes and prescription drugs have been found to be increasingly addictive because of our slower metabolism. This increases our risk of substance abuse toxicity and overdose.
 - Women become intoxicated with smaller volumes of alcohol than men because as our bodies age we tend to have more body fat and less water to dilute the alcohol.

Why else do older adults have a more difficult time with use, misuse and dependence?

- The consumption of alcohol, benzodiazepines or prescription opioids can cause significant impairments in motor coordination, vision and attentional processing, which can result in falls and accidents.
- Cognitive impairment can also compromise one's ability to self-monitor medications and alcohol use.

Increased Demands & Treatment Complications

- Studies estimate by 2020, as many as 5.7 million adults aged 50 and older will have a substance use disorder.
- This will place increased demands on the treatment system over the next two decades.
- Unfortunately, older adults are less likely than younger adults to recognize their need for treatment.

Data: Han, Gfroerer, Colliver, & Penne, 2009

Myth Busting:

“Who am I to take away my aging loved one’s last pleasures in life? If they need pills or booze to get by, so what? Who is it hurting? They deserve to reward themselves now.”

Many people mistake addiction for pleasure.

When alcohol and medication usage continues to inhibit one’s conscious growth, happiness, health and/or safety, then it has become a problem. Addiction is not a reward system. Being chemically dependent isn’t one of life’s last pleasures.

Myth busting requires that we address the false premises that “it’s all down hill from here” or “there isn’t much to enjoy as we get older”. These prevailing beliefs and attitudes are what fuels ageism and addict-type thinking.

Myth Busting - continued

“I can’t be addicted. My doctor prescribed these sleeping pills. And he told me it was fine to have a glass or two of wine each night. I’ve done it for years.”

Doctors are human beings too.

Many westernized physicians have received little to none training in addiction and functional medicine. Many treating professionals are untreated addicts themselves and/or are blinded by their own ageism. A doctor’s beliefs about aging can lead to unnecessary medication scripts for the BoomerPlus population. Western medicine has been largely influenced by huge pharmaceutical companies. Medications are often the only prescribed treatment because that is their training.

Unfortunately, some medical doctors still have limited knowledge or interest in recommending other proven (non-medication) treatments including psychotherapy, acupuncture, chiropractic, or yoga.

“Take the green pill first. Then 4 hours later take the blue pill with lunch...”

- As we age, we have a longer medical history. Our current standard of western medicine doesn't fit with healthy pro-aging. Within 15 minutes (or less) doctors are diagnosing and prescribing medications that many older patients will continue to take for years.
- More than 50% of all prescription medications are used incorrectly by older adults (who believe they are following doctor's orders).
- This leads to 125,000 deaths each year and over \$20 Billion in health care costs.



A Growing Epidemic: Opioid pain medications

- 46 Americans die each day from prescription painkiller (opioid) overdoses.
- Between 1993 and 2012, the rate of hospitalizations for prescription pain pill overdose increased 500% among people 45 to 85.
- The rate of overdose deaths for adults ages 55 to 64 soared 700%.
- The group with the highest death rate was the 45-54 age group—more than four times the rate for teenagers and young adults.

Data: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Painkiller Epidemic – cont.

- Patients who take an opioid drug for 3-6 months are highly likely to be still taking it *years later*.
- A nursing home study of 21,00 residents in the U.S. revealed 30% of them were prescribed opioids. (Won, 2004)
- Despite years of prescribing opioids, a 2014 search of the medical literature found almost no studies that have looked at the effects of long-term use of opioids.
(Dr Chou, Professor of Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University).

Over-medicated?

Consider the stats.

- Older women consume 60% of all prescription & over-the-counter medications.
- Written prescriptions per older adult averages 15 prescriptions per year.
- 83% of percent of people over age 65 use prescription medications.
- 17 million of these scripts are for tranquilizers (benzodiazepines). All benzo's have the potential for physiological dependence, even when taken for as little as two months.

Cornered

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Dang, thought Alice. Now my meds
are interacting.

Undiscovered & Untreated

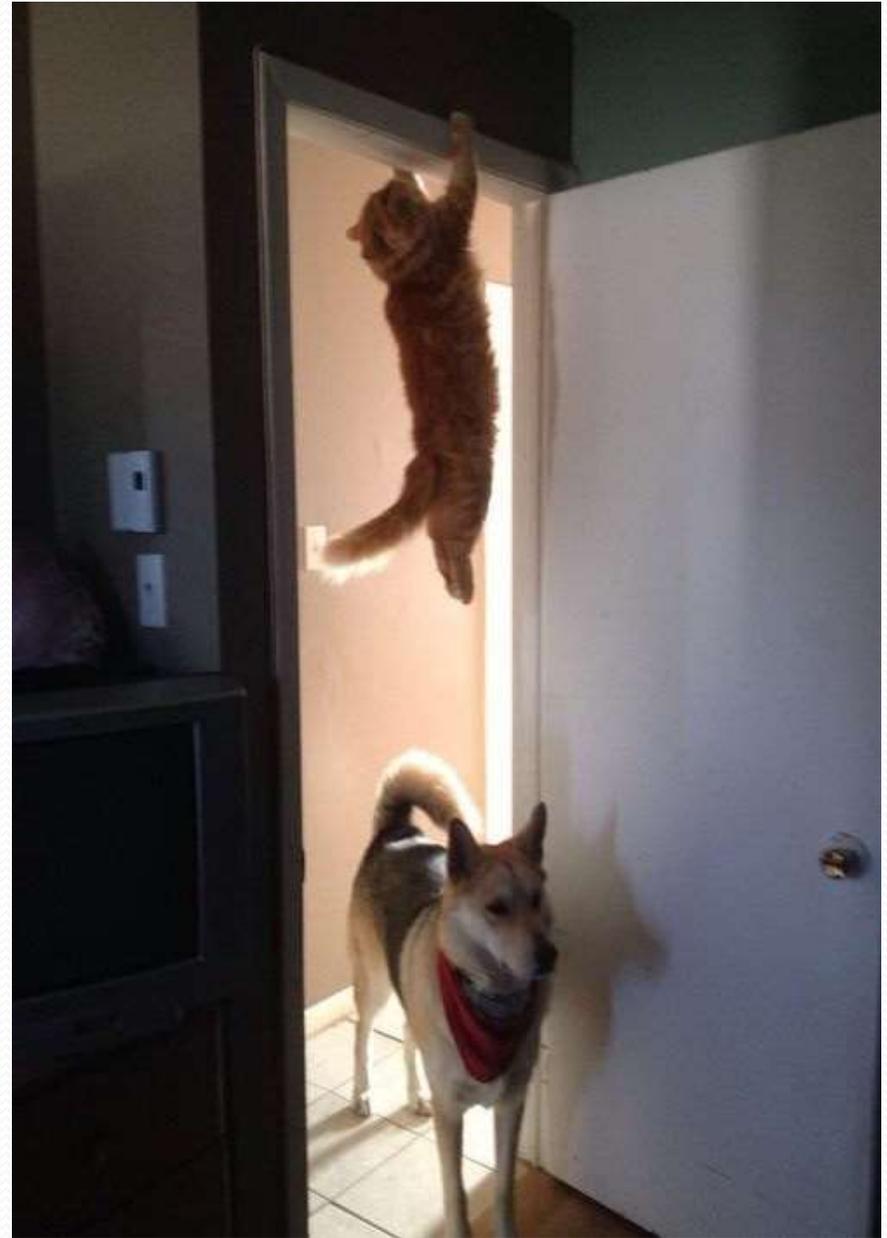
Under the Rug: Substance Abuse and the Mature Woman, June 1998, The National Center and Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA)

- Less than 1% of doctors involved in the study were able to identify a classic profile of an alcoholic woman as having an alcohol problem.
- Less than 1% of the doctors were unable to identify substance abuse and other addictions.
- Compare this to 70% to 80% of people with such diseases as high blood pressure and diabetes who were diagnosed and treated.

Way Under the Rug.....

- Of the estimated 1.8 million women 59+ who needed treatment for alcoholism, less than 11,000 received it.
- 80% of the cases of addiction were missed and diagnosed with depression.
- The study revealed that only 2% of the physicians said they believe drug rehabilitation is effective. Which led to only 2% of the addicted women over the age of 59 receiving help.

Where'd she go?





A recent poll of recovering people found that 70% sought help only after family, friends or co-workers intervened.

*That pain in my knee means rain
is coming. And that pain in my
neck means relatives are coming.*



JWagner

BoomerPlus+ Treatment & Recovery Model

Older adults benefit most from age-specific treatment programs but very few programs exist in the United States.

Most treatment centers group 50+ patients with young adults. If the young adults are addicted to heroin, crystal meth, and cocaine, these lifestyles and perceptions can be difficult for many older adults to relate to in early stages of recovery.

Effective rehabilitation needs to reflect the shared values and experience of the corresponding generation they are serving.

BoomerPlus+ Treatment

Key Elements:

- ❑ Detoxification and recovery is a slower process because of the natural aging aspects of the physical body and mind.
- ❑ Specialized medical /clinical staffing is required during detox especially since decompensation can occur and pose greater health risks with older adults.

BoomerPlus+ Treatment

Key Elements - cont.

- ❑ Specialized therapy and psycho-educational groups need to address life transitions, unresolved grief, nutrition, exercise, work or volunteer goals, social support and having sober fun.
- ❑ Shorter program sessions and longer rest periods are recommended.
- ❑ Older adults respond better to daily one-to-one contact with counselors to help them build rapport and trust. Good manners and respectful communication is valued over direct confrontation.

BoomerPlus+ Treatment

Key Elements- cont.

- ❑ Preserving human dignity is a primary goal in age-specific treatment.
- ❑ Weekly groups for family member & friends to learn about addiction and learn new recovery tools for themselves.
- ❑ Couples and family therapy sessions are essential to help break through denial and to learn healthier patterns of communication.

BoomerPlus+ Long Term Recovery

What's needed:

- ❑ Ongoing 12-Step program support for the patient and their family. Studies show that participation in 12-step meetings and the fellowship are essential for those reporting 10 or more years of sobriety.
- ❑ Sober Living Homes for the 50+
- ❑ Development of sober 'retirement' places to support long-term recovery and healthy pro-aging.

**Marcia Newman, MA, LMFT – *The Silver Tsunami: Aging & Addiction in America*
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Questions and Answers