NURSING STUDENT SURVEY

Read each of the statements and determine if you believe the statement to be TRUE or FALSE.

1. The majority of older people have Alzheimer’s disease or some type of dementia. True False
2. In general, most older people tend to be pretty much alike. True False
3. Most old people lose interest in and capacity for sexual relations. True False
4. Decline in all five senses normally occurs with aging. True False
5. Physical strength tends to decline with old age. True False
6. Older adults have difficulty learning new information. True False
7. Personality changes with aging True False
8. The majority of older adults say they are happy most of the time True False
9. Over half of older adults are living in a nursing home. True False
10. Most older adults are poor, that is, they have incomes below the poverty level. True False
11. Having pain is a normal age related change. True False
12. Older adults have the highest suicide rate of any age group. True False
13. Older people tend to become more religious as they grow older. True False
14. Abuse of older adults is a significant problem in the U.S. True False
15. Older persons take longer to recover from physical and psychological stress. True False
16. The majority of older adults consider their health to be good or excellent. True False
17. Older workers cannot work as effectively as younger workers. True False
18. Memory loss is a normal part of aging. True False
19. It is difficult for older people to learn new things. True False

Questions adapted from What do you know about aging? Center on Aging Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. [http://cas.umkc.edu/agingstudies/AgingFactsQuiz.asp](http://cas.umkc.edu/agingstudies/AgingFactsQuiz.asp) and Webster University [http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/myth.html](http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/myth.html)

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Please answer the following questions about yourself:

20. I have had experience working with older people. Yes No

21. I regularly interact with my grandparents or other elderly relatives and friends. Yes No

22. I am confident in providing care to older people. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

23. I would be more confident caring for older people if I had more experience. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

24. I would be more confident caring for older people if I had more knowledge. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

25. I enjoy providing nursing care to older people. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

26. I am interested in a career in geriatric nursing. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

27. I would like to be a gerontological advanced practice nurse. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

28. I would like to specialize in geriatric nursing. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

29. At some point in my career, I would like to work in a nursing home as a professional nurse. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

30. At some point in my career, I would like to work in a community-based agency serving older adults. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

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31. Which of the following best describes your status as a nursing student:

- First year, first semester
- First year, second semester
- Second year, first semester
- Second year, second semester
- Third year, first semester
- Third year, second semester
- Fourth year, first semester
- Fourth year, second semester
- Other:

32. What type of nursing program are you currently completing?

- Associate degree
- Baccalaureate degree
STUDENT SURVEY  Answers to True/False Questions

1.  **False.** Almost 90% of people who are 65 years of age do NOT have Alzheimer's Disease.

2.  **False.** Older adults are at least as diverse as any other age group in the population, and on many dimensions they may actually be more diverse. People vary greatly in their health, social role, and coping experiences. As the older population becomes more and more ethnically diverse, differences could be even greater. It is very misleading to talk about older adults as "the elderly," for this term may obscure the great heterogeneity of this age group.

3.  **False.** Recent studies validate that more than 70% of men and women continue sexual activity after 65 years. Men and women over 70 are still considered potentially "sexy," Reasons for limited sexual activity include loss of partners, illness and medications. Most older adults consider intimacy crucial to relationships and emotional well being. Intimacy may be satisfied by other means than sexual relations, such as touch, hugging and holding.

4.  **True.** While there is considerable individual variation, on average sensory processes (vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) don't work as well as people get older. Another way to say it is that the threshold at which we take in stimuli increases with age. The eye lens, for example, is less able to change shape so as to adjust to close and far objects, and the size of the pupil narrows so as to let in less light. Hearing loss begins at age 20, and for many involves growing inability to hear higher frequencies as sensory receptors in the ear and nerve cells in the auditory pathway to the brain are lost. Taste buds become less sensitive with aging, and after age 80 more than 75 percent of older adults show major impairment in their sense of smell. Many of these normal changes can be compensated for through increasingly sophisticated assistive devices (hearing aides, glasses, etc.) and through modifications of the older person's environment.

5.  **True.** Muscle mass declines, cartilage erodes, membranes fibrose (harden), and fluid thickens. These contribute to stiffness, gait problems, lessened mobility, and limited range of motion. From age 30 years, muscle mass declines to almost 50% in old age. Research shows that weight bearing exercise, aerobics and weight resistance can restore muscle strength, increase stamina, stabilize balance and minimize falls.

6.  **False.** Older adults are capable of learning new information (as demonstrated by the number of older adults who are highly computer literate and actively involved on the WWW). There is some research that states that older adults may take a little longer to learn new information and may use different learning strategies (probably the result of generational differences). Research on memory (obviously highly related to ability to learn) is highly contradictory concerning changes with age. Research has clearly demonstrated, however, that the memory performance of healthy older adults can be improved with memory training. Thus, an older adult who is concerned about their memory might want to consider a memory training course/seminar. Finally, individuals who note a decline in memory during midlife should look to the largest contributor to temporary memory problems - stress! With increased stress, memory abilities do show a dramatic, but temporary, decline.

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7. **False.** Personality remains consistent in men and women throughout life. Personality impacts roles and life satisfaction. Particular traits in youth and middle age will not only persist but may be more pronounced in later life.

8. **True.** The majority of older adults report high levels of life satisfaction. The more socially active an individual is, the higher their life satisfaction. Thus, the importance of remaining involved in informal, intimate activities.

9. **False.** According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, slightly over 5 percent of the 65 population occupy nursing homes, congregate care, assisted living, and board-and-care homes, and about 4.2 percent are in nursing homes at any given time. The rate of nursing home use increases with age from 1.4 percent for the young-old to 24.5 percent of the oldest-old. Almost 50 percent of those 95 and older live in nursing homes.

10. **False.** The majority of older adults have incomes above the poverty level. However, this is somewhat deceptive as the Federal Poverty Line is lower for individuals 65 and over than for those under sixty-five. Currently, we have the wealthiest but also the poorest older adult population in U.S. history.

11. **False.** Pain is not a natural part of the aging process. Rather it is a sign of injury or illness. As such, pain should not be ignored. Unfortunately, too often people will attribute pain too aging and wait too long to seek medical help with negative outcomes.

12. **True.** The national suicide rate is about 12 per 100,000 population, while it is 1.3 for those aged 65 to 74 and 23 per 100,000 for those over age 85. It has been estimated that 17 to 25 percent of all reported suicides occur in persons aged 65 and older. (Hooyman, 178). However, older white males largely account for this high rate. For white women and for men and women of all other races, the suicide rate peaks earlier in the life span. Older adults also have a higher ratio of completed to attempted suicides than younger groups. The higher suicide rates might be explained by a variety of factors, including the loss of roles and status, chronic illnesses that diminish one’s sense of control, and social isolation.

13. **False.** Studies have found no increase in average religious interest, satisfaction or activities among older people as they age. The present generation of older persons (cohort) tends to be more religious than younger generations due to their upbringing, i.e., they have been more religious all their lives rather than becoming more religious as they aged. However, research has indicated that religion does seem to become more important with age and older adults do rely on their faith to cope with losses.

14. **False.** The low numbers of reported cases of elder abuse belie the magnitude of elder abuse in this country. Latest figures estimate more than 551,000 reported cases of abuse (physical, verbal and sexual types of neglect or abuse) to persons over 60 years per year. (There are more than 30 million Americans over 60 years.) Actual reported cases represent a fraction of what is thought to occur due to perceived fearful consequences and inconsistent and inefficient report mechanisms. Self neglect and exploitative types of abuse, were not part of the above study and yet are more common. Men and women are equally culpable in the perpetration of abuse.
15. **True.** Older adults do experience multiple losses of loved ones and friends, illness, relocation, retirement, income, change and decline in abilities. It may take an older adult longer to adjust to a major change or recover from prolonged and intense physical and emotional stress. The recovery of an older body from a traumatic event may be delayed due to age related decreases in cardiac output and heart rate and more vulnerability to disease with a less effective immune system. However, the many older adults who have developed active and healthy lifestyles may be able to resist/mitigate some of the negative effects of stress or illness due to their physiological fitness. Likewise, coping skills that have been honed during a lifetime may lessen the damage of psychological stresses and ease adjustments to loss and change.

16. **True.** The majority of older adults perceive their health to be good to excellent, as they do not compare their current condition to former states, but rather to their peers their ages and older who may be "worse off." The "ratings" are not a medical assessment. While chronic disease, frailty and disability are correlated with advanced age, the Myths and Realities 2000 study discovered that 84% of all Americans would like to live to 90 years and half of persons over 65 years described their lives as "the best years of my life." Disease and disability are being delayed and functional levels are improving, especially in persons over 80 years. Less than 10% of non-institutionalized persons 70 years and over are unable to perform one or more activities of daily living (ADLs). Disability does increase to 22% for those 85 years and older.

17. **False.** Negative perceptions of older workers persist because of health issues, diminished energy, discomfort with technology, closeness to retirement, and reaction to change in the work place -- all associated with older adults. To the contrary, research identified characteristics of low turnover, less voluntary absenteeism and fewer injuries in older workers. Recent high ratings of older workers from employers cite loyalty, dependability, emotional stability, congeniality with co-workers, and consistent and accurate work outcomes. While more are retiring earlier and spending fewer years working, older workers will be in greater demand with dwindling entrants into the work force.

18. **True.** As one ages there is modest memory loss, primarily short-term memory (recent events). Older adults are more likely to retain past or new information that is based on knowledge acquired or builds upon their life course or events. Retrieval of information may slow with age. The causes of these changes are unknown, but may include stress, loss, physical disease, medication effects and depression. Lack of attention, fatigue, hearing loss, misunderstanding are among factors impacting memory loss in persons of all ages. Strategies such as activity and exercise, association, visualization, environmental cueing, organization by category and connection to a place may help to prompt memory. New research has revealed that 40% of persons diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (beyond what is expected for a person of that age and education) are likely to develop Alzheimer's disease within 3 years.

19. **False.** Although learning performance tends on average to decline with age, all age groups can learn. Research studies have shown that learning performances can be improved with instructions and practice, extra time to learn information or skills, and relevance of the learning task to interests and expertise. It is well established that those who regularly practice their learning skills maintain their learning efficiency over their life span.