

# Factors and Alleviation of Learned Helplessness in the Elderly

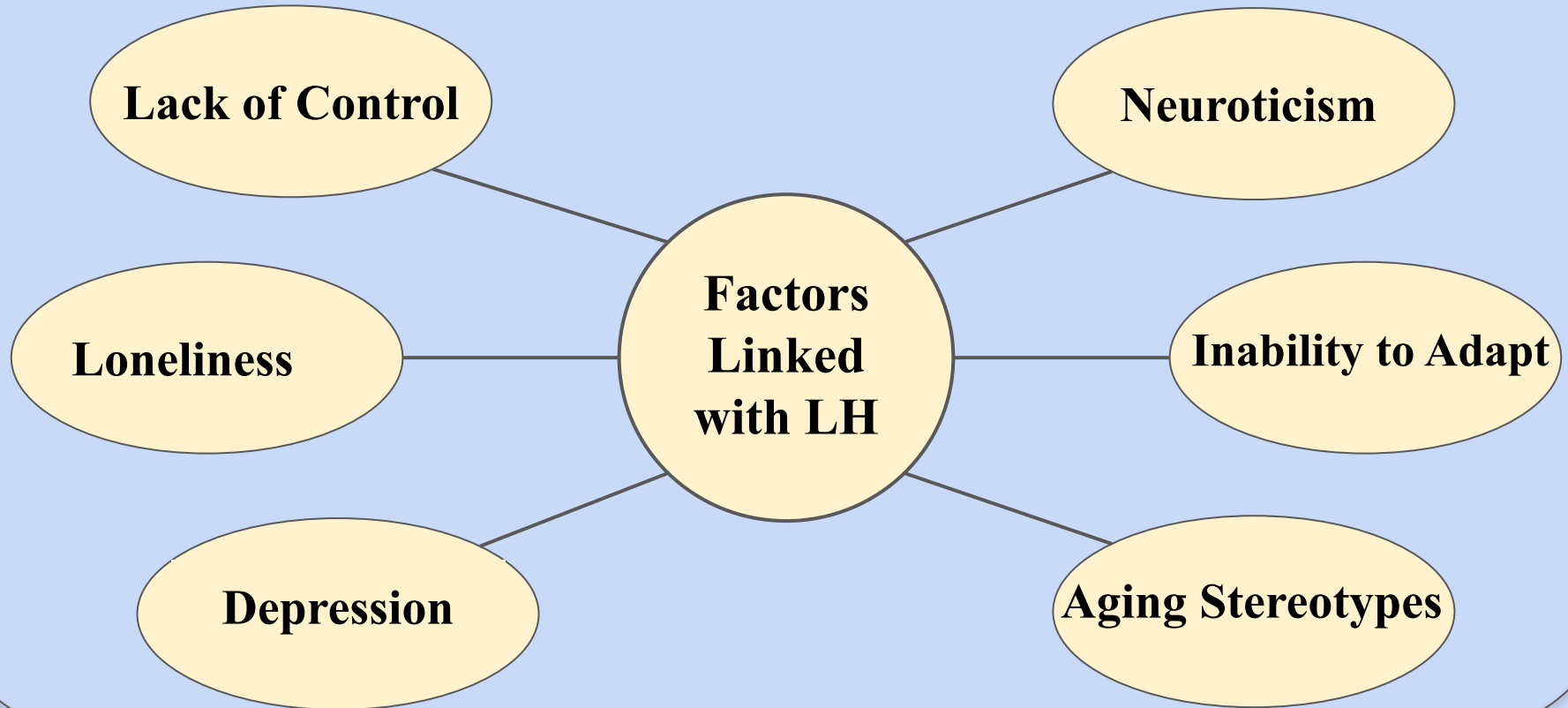
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What factors can help us recognize learned helplessness (LH) and what can alleviate it in the elderly?

## What is LH and its relation to aging?

- Condition caused by maladaptive thinking related to a sense of powerlessness that can result from lack of control
- Unhealthy aging involves depression, ailments, lack of personal control, and loneliness (Williamson & Christie, 2009)
- Healthy aging involves purpose, belonging, socializing, and the ability to adapt to uncontrollables (Keyes, 2010; Buettner & Skemp, 2016)

# Factors Related to LH



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- Lack of Control
  - Lack of is detrimental to mental and physical health (Rodin & Langer, 1977)
  - Elderly long term care can provide a sense of being stuck for residents (Gleibs, Sonnenberg, & Haslam, 2013)
- Loneliness
  - 1 in 3 adults 45 and older felt lonely (Anderson & Thayer, 2010)
  - Loneliness is associated with poor mental and physical health
    - Risk of mortality is greater (Jansson et al., 2017)

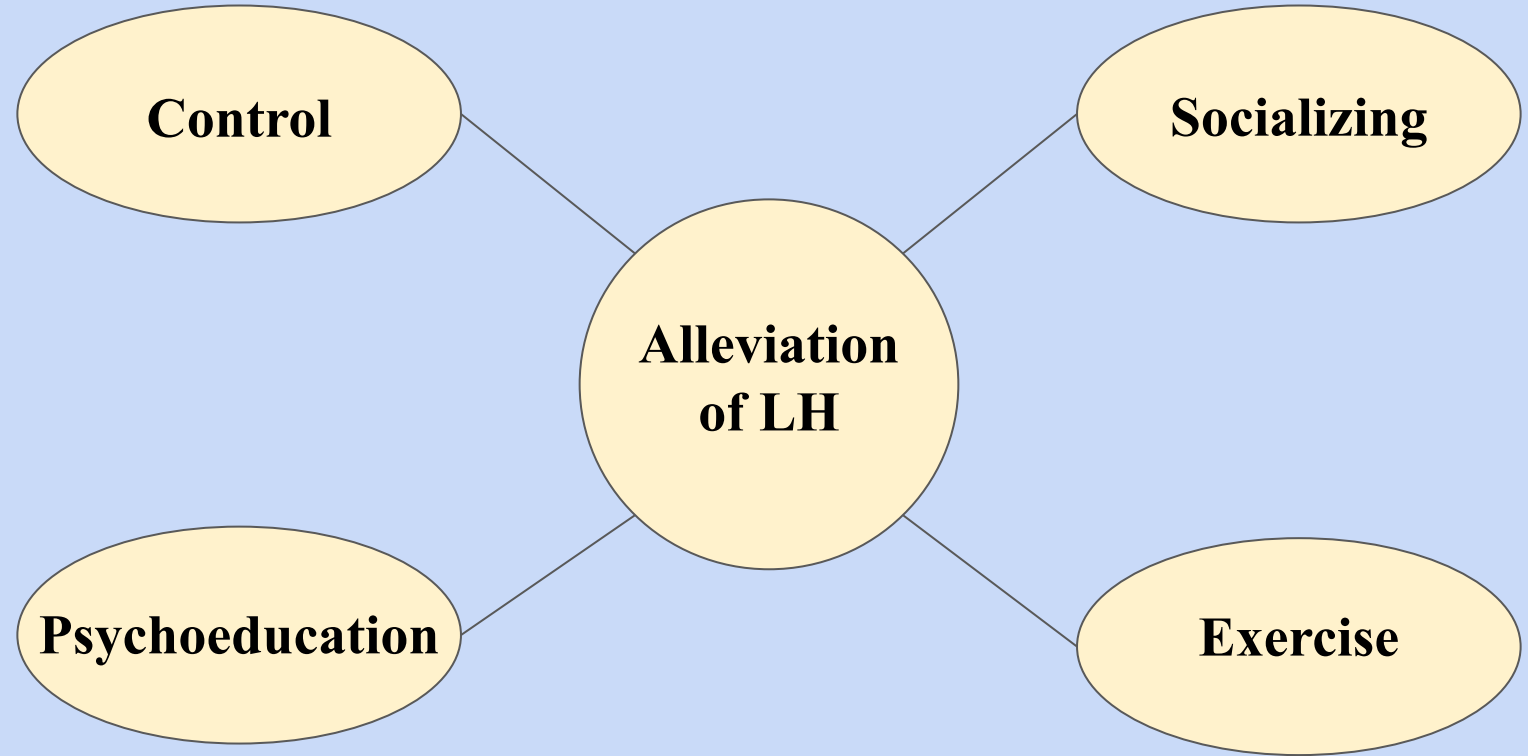
# Factors Related to LH

- Depression — persistent feeling of sadness and hopelessness that results in loss of motivation (Truschel, 2019)
  - Predicted by being older, having limited social interaction and poor physical health (Adams, Sanders, & Auth, 2004)
  - Decreased physical health and higher levels of depression were associated with increased levels of suicide attempts and suicide ideation in elderly (Shin et al, 2013)
- Neuroticism
  - Correlated positively to negative affect while extraversion correlated positively with positive affect (Goldberg, 1992)

# Factors Related to LH

- Inability to Adapt
  - Having the ability to adapt to new situations later in life relates to flourishing (Fischer, Norberg, & Lundman, 2008)
- Aging Stereotypes
  - Negative aging stereotypes can be debilitating through self-fulfilling prophecy (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010)

# Alleviation of LH





# Alleviation of LH

- Control and Socializing
  - Induces purpose and decreases feelings of being stuck (Gleibs et al., 2013; Rodin & Langer, 1976)
  - Being a part of a therapy group decreases loneliness (Coll- Planas et al., 2017).

# Alleviation of LH

- Group Psychoeducation
  - Providing helpful information on healthy aging and safe behavior while in a group environment decreases depression and loneliness while educating and giving emotional support (Pagnini, 2016; Savikko et al., 2009)

# Alleviation of LH

- Exercise
  - Associated with less risk of dependence and higher levels of self-esteem (Fave et al., 2018; Moral-García et al., 2018).
  - Helps the mind and body

# Controversies

- Increased control can increase activity and increase fall risk (Stevens, Holman, & Bennet, 2001)
  - Need to find a healthy balance of control through adaptability
- The invincible mindset can cause more harm than good
  - They are less likely to visit the doctor, seek care poorly, and deny risk of health (Chipperfield et. al., 2016).

# Call to Action

- There needs to be more emphasis on teaching not only caregivers but the individuals themselves about LH and the factors that are linked with it
- Even taking part in the alleviating strategies can be a way to prevent it by staying active, socializing, and learning how to live a healthy lifestyle

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