

Topic: Cultural Adjustment
(IOM Nepal)

Activity: Part II: Seniors

Introduction

At this point, participants may not yet have realized the challenges to be faced by seniors. Usually, in Nepal, they will have focused on the additional roles fathers and sons will have to take on. Generally, at this time, the view regarding seniors is that they are old and can now afford to relax and have everyone take care of them.

Key Teaching Points

- ✓ Bhutanese elderly face serious challenges to adapting to life in the U.S., partly due to prevailing Bhutanese attitudes towards old age.

Lesson Time

20-30 minutes

Materials

- Photos of elderly people (Bhutanese in Nepal, Americans in America, and Bhutanese in America, both active and passive; included)
- Discussion Questions Set I, 1 copy per group (included)
- Discussion Questions Set II, 1 copy per group (included)
- Optional: Inspirational Stories and Pictures of a few elderly people (included)

Practice

1. Take the “Grandmother/Grandfather” headings from the Part I: Family Roles exercise and lay them out in a convenient place in the middle of the classroom.
2. Hand out to participants the photos of elderly Bhutanese in Nepal, elderly Americans in America, and the passive Bhutanese in America. (Do not, at this time, give out the pictures of active Bhutanese in America.)
3. Have participants place the pictures in the relevant column and study them.
4. Once done, hold a brief discussion with the whole group as to what they see. (Elderly in Nepal had a useful life, elderly Americans are active, elderly Bhutanese in America are inactive.)
5. Tell the group you now want to hear what the old people have to say. Arrange the group in a “fishbowl” arrangement, where the seniors sit in a small circle in the middle of the room and everybody else sits in a large circle around them. Only the people in the center circle are allowed to talk.
6. Hand out the discussion questions to the small group and allow them to discuss.
7. Hand out the pictures of the active Bhutanese seniors in America. Allow participants in the middle circle to discuss. Then hand out the second set of discussion questions.
8. After the center circle has completed its discussion, allow members of the outer circle to voice their views.

Variations

If you still have time, hand out the pictures and descriptions of some inspirational seniors and allow the class to discuss.

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Discussion Questions, Set I

1. Why do these elderly Bhutanese live such an inactive life in America? What are the challenges they face? (Can't speak English, sick, don't know how to use the bus, no friends nearby, can't get a job, etc.)
2. Are all American seniors as active as these pictures show? (No, not all, some are sick, etc.)
3. Are all Bhutanese seniors in America as passive? (No)

Discussion Questions, Set II

1. What are the consequences of living such a passive life? (Depression, loneliness, added stress on all family members)
2. What can be done about this, by you and by other family members?

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Inspirational Stories and Pictures

When the elderly people discuss the questions in the fishbowl seating arrangement, they come up with the responses that “we are already old, we are illiterate, we have chronic disease so we could not do anything, we’re waiting for death, etc.” So to inspire them they also could do something, as many elderly Americans have long and active lives. We usually give them life stories of some individuals who became famous in their old age.

Individuals Who Became Famous in Their Old Age



Arthur Winston

A Los Angeles man who worked cleaning buses for the Metropolitan Transport Authority for 76 years has finally called it quits on his 100th birthday. Arthur Winston was only absent for one day during his working life - when his wife died in 1988. In 1996, Mr. Winston was

honoured by former U.S. President Bill Clinton as “Employee of the Century”. He said, “I just kept on going - I’d rather be moving, working or doing something than laying around the house.”



Winifred Pristell

A 70-year-old great-grandmother who *holds two powerlifting records*. She started to join the fitness industry when she was already in her late 40s. So at the ripe old age of 60, she started to join competitions in *powerlifting*. Despite suffering

from joint problems and arthritis, Ms. Pristell still engages in a workout session about 2-3 times a week!

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Ruth Hamilton

For a long time now, a lot of people believed that the elderly cannot be bothered anymore to learn about how to use computers or the latest technological gadgets. Apparently, Ruth Hamilton was not just able to

use the computer at such an age - she also became an avid blogger. The woman who used to be a *school teacher in Iowa* was given a new lease in life through her video blog which was posted in *GrowingBolder.com*.



Jennifer Figge

It's a difficult enough feat to pull off when you are at your physical peak, but what if you are a 56-year-old woman? This was the exact age of Jennifer Figge when she became the *first woman to ever swim across the Atlantic Ocean*.

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