

Praise Hong

MFT 603: Individual & Family Development

Week 13 Reading Points

Change is stressful and uncomfortable – it introduces more ambiguity than we would like. We have spent the past few years dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in such ambiguity. However, history tells us that many large-scale losses actually resulted in positive changes. Perhaps it's a similar concept of hitting rock bottom – in the face of such adversity and struggle, the only way forward is up. Even when things seem absurdly abysmal, we are capable of having hope and changing for the better.

Despite the variation in individual decline, the oldest-old typically experience significant decline and are most likely to have serious health problems and need help in multiple personal care areas. This period of decline is different from “positive” aging and can observe the devaluing of older adults. Such steep decline can lead to these older adults experiencing grief and loss.

Ethical decisions in regards to end of life care can be challenging for patients, families, and healthcare professionals. I have had close family members tell me that they wish to be taken off life support if there is a low chance of them surviving. There are certainly cultural and religious factors that play into this topic. Health care professionals, including therapists, can be better equipped to meet the needs of their patients and their families by educating themselves on different cultures and how they practice dealing with death.