

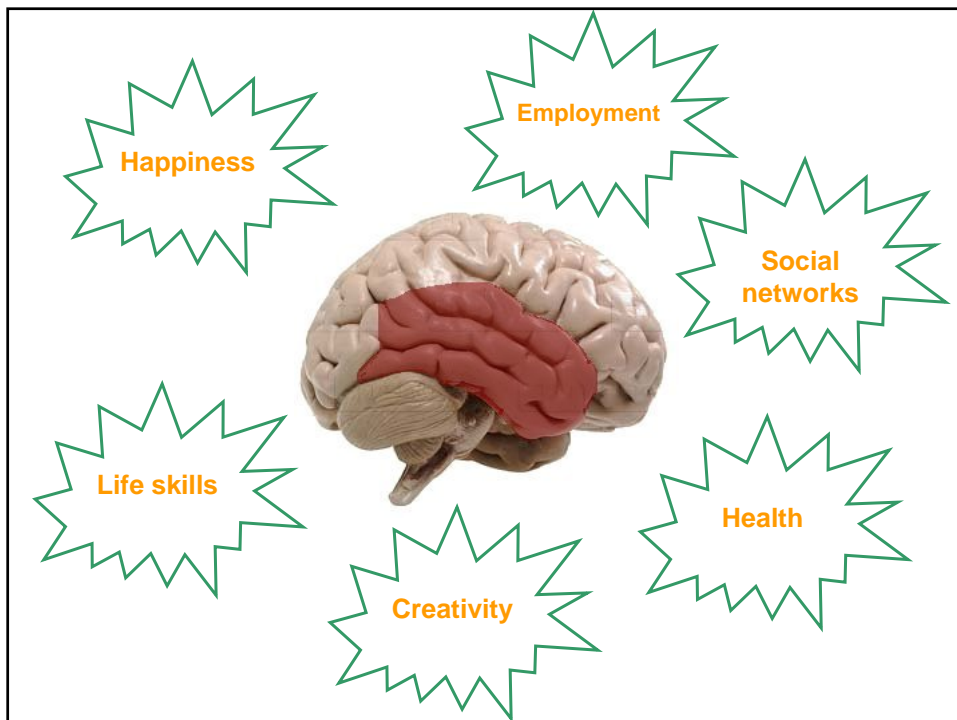
The Foundation for Science and Technology
"Raising Skills in the UK Workforce"
1st April 2009

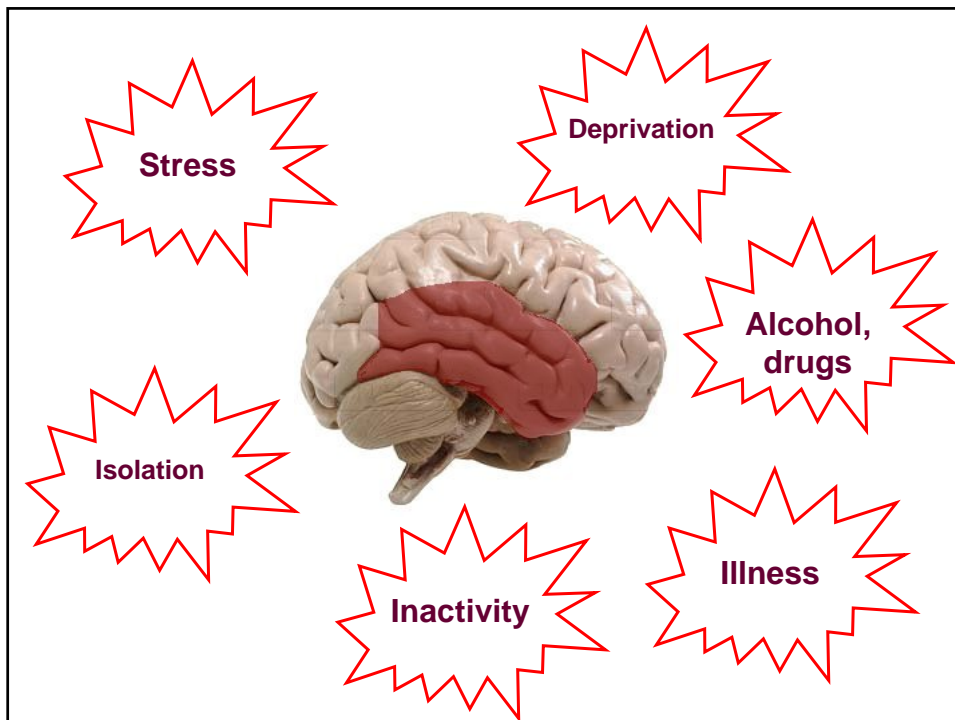


Mental Capital Through Life: Skills for All Ages



Tom Kirkwood
Institute for Ageing and Health
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Government
Office for
Science

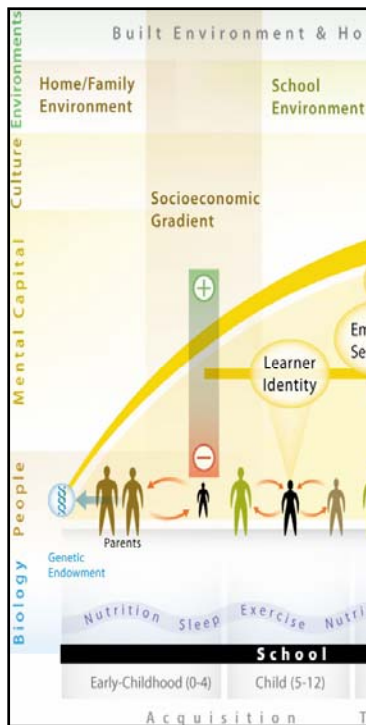
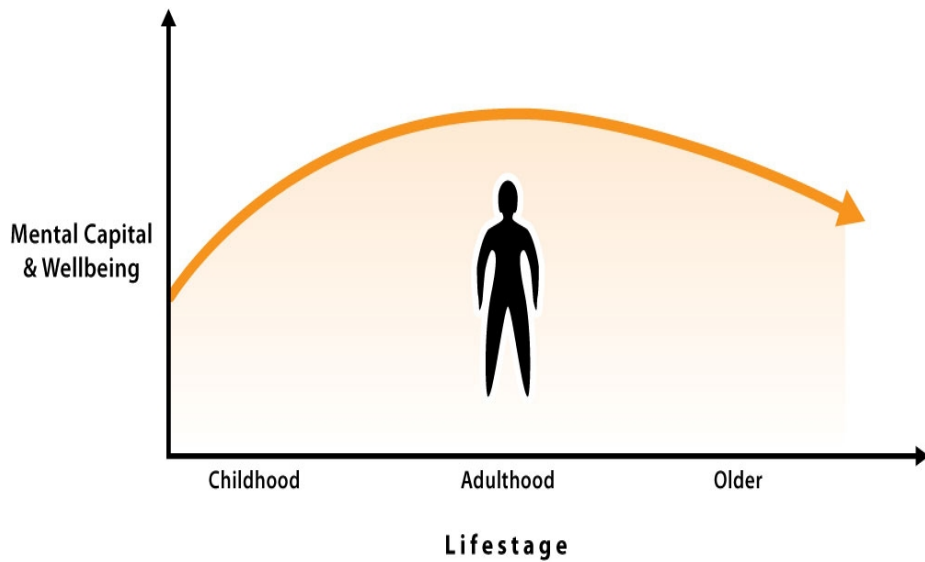
 Foresight

Mental Capital Through Life

Mental capital refers to the totality of an individual's cognitive and emotional resources, including their:

- Cognitive ability
- Flexibility and efficiency of learning
- Emotional intelligence
- Resilience in the face of stress

The Life Course Trajectory of Mental Capital and Wellbeing



Genetic endowment

Nourishment in the womb

Safe and secure environment

Early stimulus

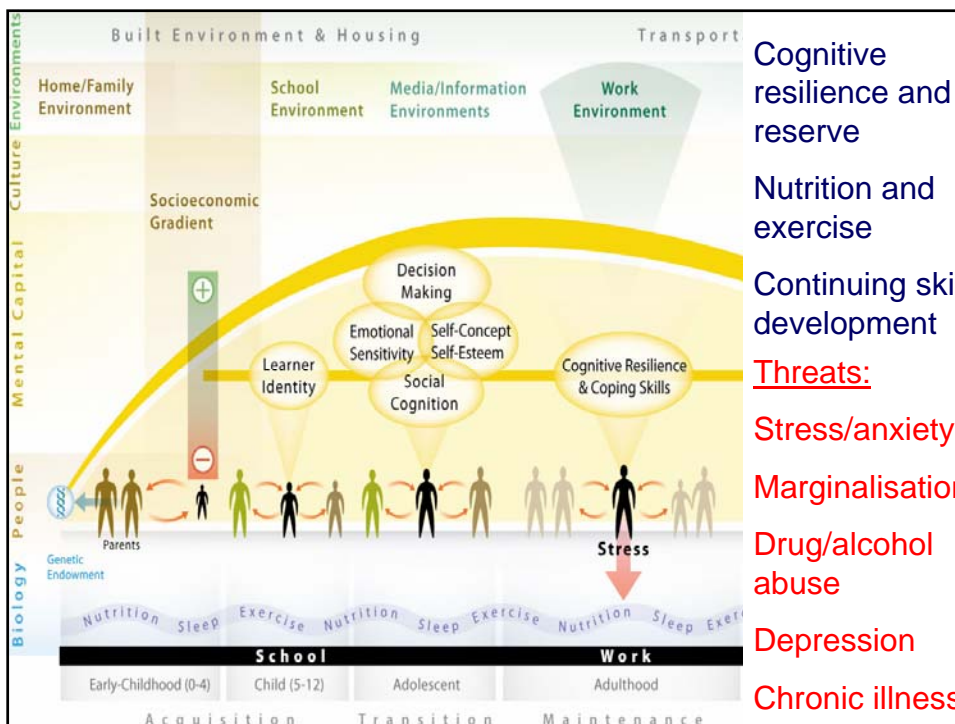
Nutrition and exercise

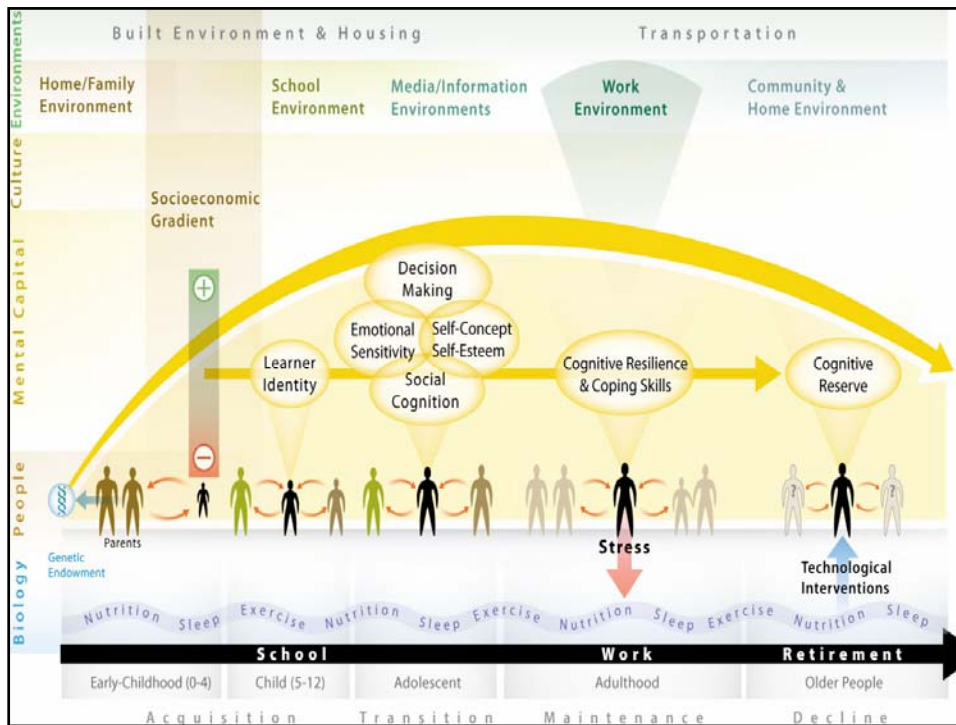
Social skills development

Threats:

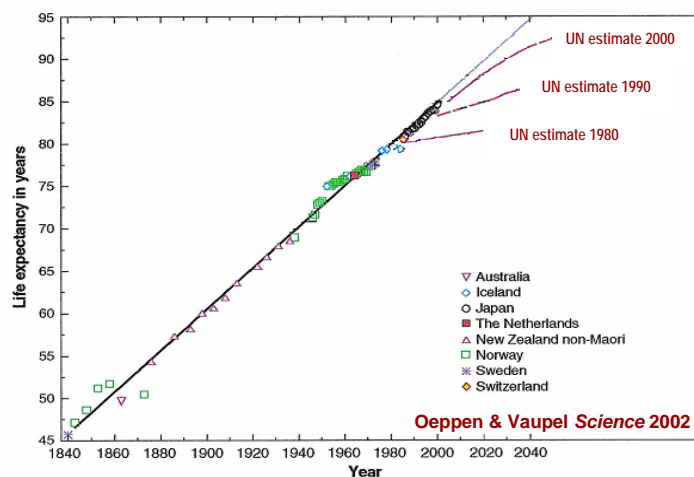
Socioeconomic disadvantage

Up to 10% of children have intrinsic learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc)





The Continuing Increase in Life Expectancy



→ Declining early/mid-life mortality
 → Declining later-life mortality

Waking up to the 29-hour day!



- Each day we have 24 hours for now, and 5 hours for later.
- How good will those 5 hours be when we come to use them?
- Can we make them better?

OCTOBER 23 2005

'SUNDAY TELEGRAPH'
(LONDON)

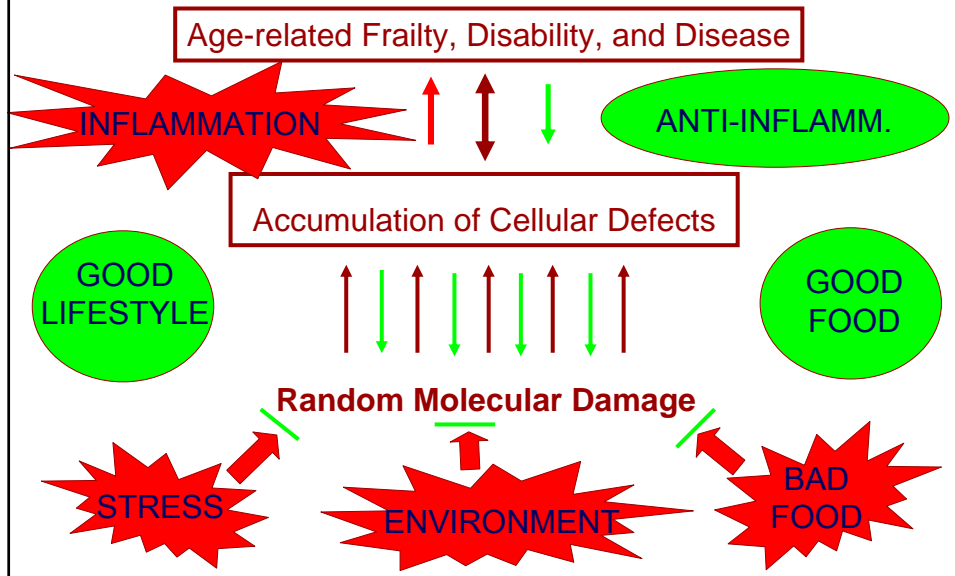
~~The bad news
is we are living
even longer~~

~~New evidence of increased longevity
creates more pain for pension funds~~

**Within the US, the economic benefit
of the increase in life span since 1970
is estimated to have been worth
\$73,000,000,000,000.**

The Ageing Process

Kirkwood *Ce//* 2005



Factors Influencing Healthy Longevity and Mental Function

- Genes
- Nutrition
- Lifestyle
- Environment
- Socioeconomic status
- Attitude
- Chance

These factors and their interactions are being studied in the Newcastle 85+ Study; a 5-year prospective study in 850 individuals born in 1921 of the biological, clinical and psychosocial factors associated with healthy ageing.

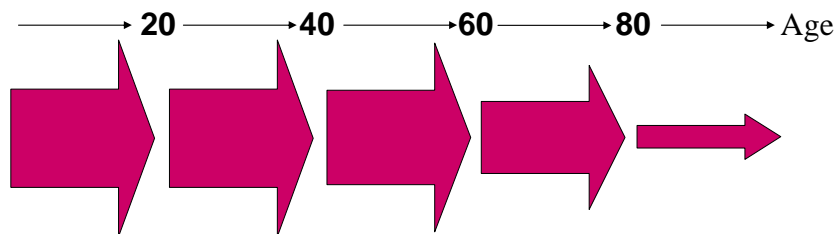


Can we afford increasing life spans?

- Increasing medical costs are driven much more by medical innovation than by living longer.
- Investing in prevention of age-related frailty and disability can be highly cost-effective.
- High cost social dependency often reflects failure of design and organisation.
- Older people are more economically productive than is commonly recognised, and can be much more so.

Huge amounts of mental capital in older people currently go to waste through being under appreciated by society and by individuals themselves

Will a greater focus on skills for older people harm the interests of the young?



- The great majority of today's children will live to be old.
- Each age cohort has its needs, including education, health care, social support, finance, leisure.
- Investing to release older cohorts from the factors that conspire to produce high-cost dependency will help to relieve 'burden' on the younger cohorts of the future.

Barriers to Changing the Status Quo

- Fatalism – “I can't change it anyway”.
- Negative stereotyping – “Old people are losers”.
- Tunnel vision – “This is how it has to be”
- Youth bias – “We must invest in the future!”
- Restrictive accounting of costs and benefits – “Why should I pay when it's not me that benefits?”
- Lack of hard evidence – “I won't consider it until it's proved to work”
- Short-term'ism – “I'll deal with it when I've fixed the immediate crisis”.

~~The Traditional View of Mental Capital~~ A New View

- ~~Mental capital is all about what we can teach people when they are young~~

We gain mental capital throughout life.

- ~~It is inevitable that mental capital loses its value and that older people become 'past it' to be pensioned off (and not allowed to become too expensive)~~

High value in mental capital of older people

- ~~Mental capital is simply about workplace skills.~~

Many dimensions to mental capital and wellbeing

- ~~The essence of happiness is pleasure.~~

The essence of happiness and mental wellbeing is a well skilled brain