



Living Well and Dying Well:

Working therapeutically with older people

Helen Kewell

Book available via this link: <https://www.pccs-books.co.uk/products/living-well-and-dying-well>

Now selling at only £11 with free postage

Or Via Amazon at [this link](#)

Why is it important?



1985-2015: No. of people aged 90+ has tripled (Source: ONS)



By 2046: No. of people aged 75+ will rise by 102% (v. average of 12.7%) (Source: ONS)



2017: 22% of men and 28% of women are reported as being depressed



40% of 65+ in GP practices have a mental health problem and 60% in care homes (Dept for Health)



Only 20% of these receive help formally for their mental health via the NHS (Source: Age UK 2018)



3.6m live alone in the UK, 2m of which are 75+ (Age UK)



Women in later life have highest suicide rate, and second highest for men (Royal College of Psychiatry)



Perceptions of ageing and age discrimination

- Even without intending to, organisations and individuals can be ageist – unconscious bias
- Report by Royal College of Psychiatry in 2018 exposed direct and indirect discrimination within health and mental health services in the UK
- Only 7% of people over 65 years receive help under IAPT, yet represent 20% of the population (Independent Age)
- RCP survey shows majority of older people would prefer talking therapy over medication – yet medication on the rise
- NHS England ‘Forward View of Mental Health’ makes little allowance for older persons and only 3/55 trusts have plans in place
- Counselling profession and charities help remedy this
- Micro political and macro political activism

Barriers to working



WW2 generation – distress as private/universal



Isolation: - Economic and logistical
 - Medical/physical/cognitive
 - Contact-impairment



Other people's agendas

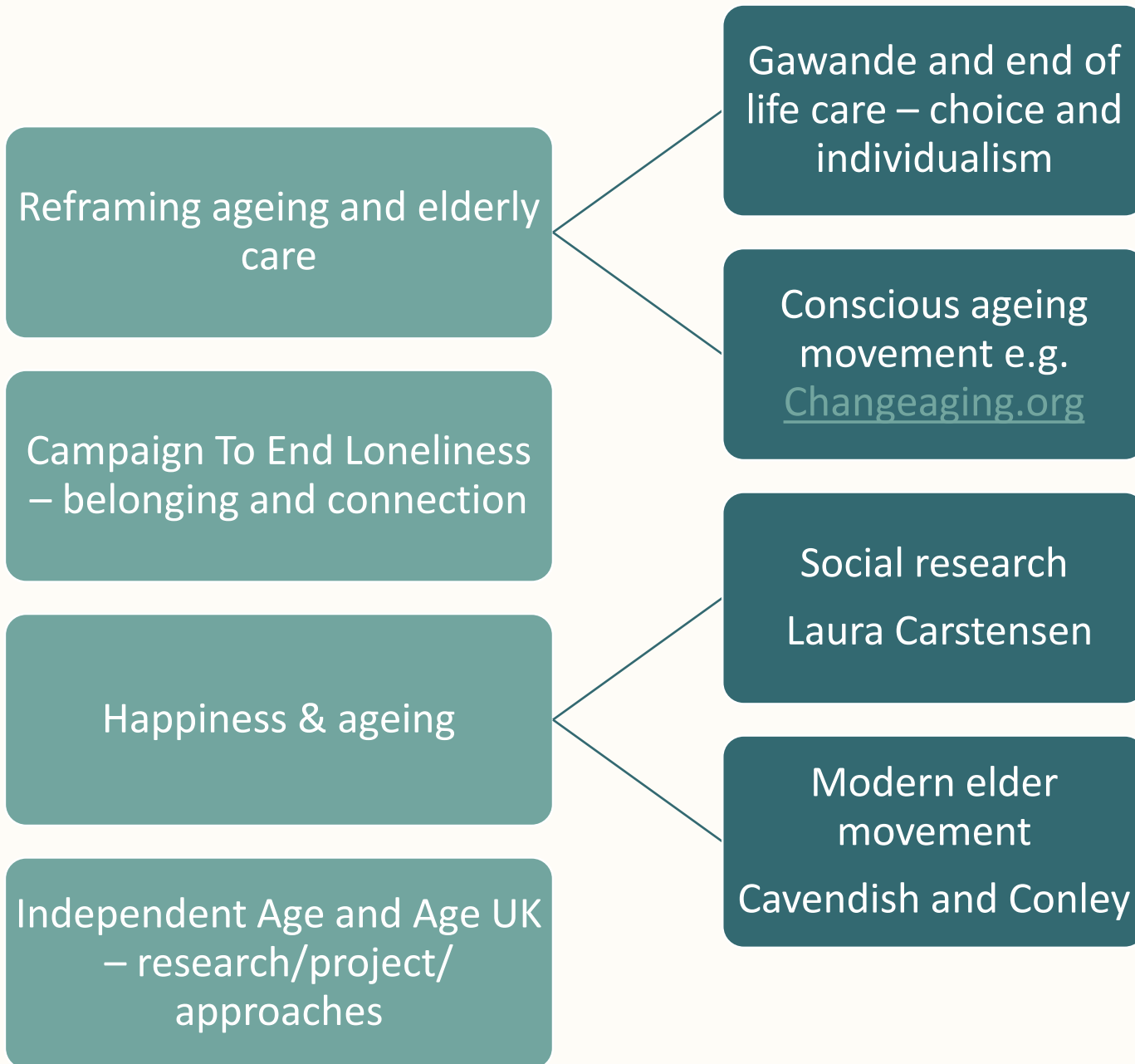


Medication



Psychology of ageing: *Looking forward/looking back*

- **Archetypes:** socially accepted ways of ageing: victim/wise/bitter
- **Not being seen** – only seen as a broad category of ‘old’
- Lack of independence and **agency**
- **Large scale loss:** role, independence, friends/family, status, capacity
- **Changes to body and brain**
- **Isolation**
- Changing relationship with **physical environment**
- **Freedom/happiness** versus **dependence/depression**
- **Reflective:** story telling, unfinished business
- Finding **meaning**, reflection and introspection



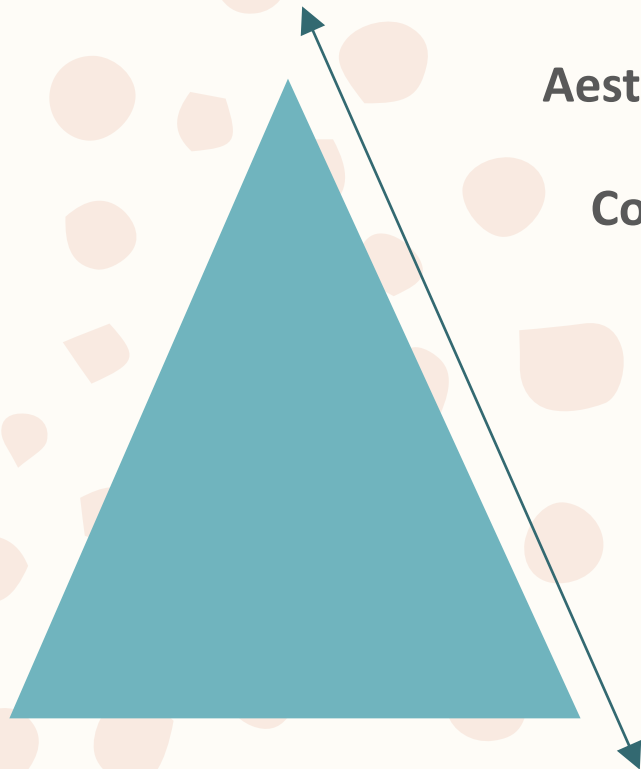
Constructive approaches to ageing



Overview of theory

- **Elder culture:** disappearing in contemporary society
- **Developmental psychology:** Erikson and Erikson
 - life reviews, acceptance, resolution, and moving towards a good death
- **Existential approaches:** finding meaning in life and engaging in death
- **Person-centred care:** acceptance, affirmation, presence of another
- **Gestalt:** unfinished business, life as a complete gestalt
- **Gerotranscendence:** development theory of positive ageing
- **Narrative approaches:** telling stories to reaffirm meaning
- **Experiential approaches:** using play/objects, writing, music, body
- **Connectedness:** groups and participation, social prescribing

Maslow's pyramid : ageing and loss



Self-actualisation: resolution, spirituality, move towards peace in death

Aesthetic: Restore equilibrium when senses, mobility, memory begin to fail

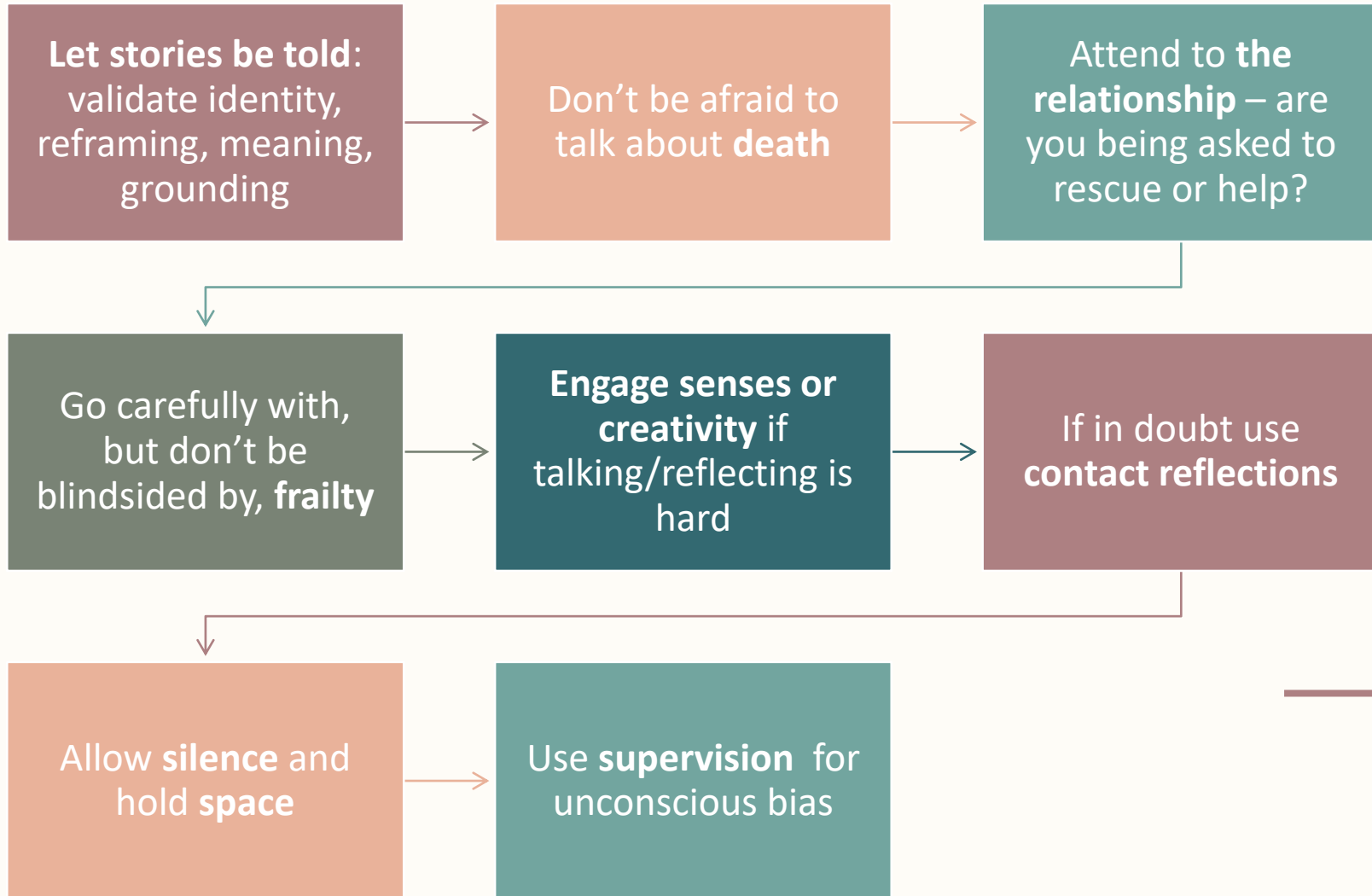
Cognitive: Make sense of a new, often unbearable reality, find a comfortable place

Esteem: recognition, affirmation of identity, self worth, listened to and respected

Belonging: human contact, connection, love

Safety: nurtured, held, safe

Physiological: nurtured, sensory stimulation, expression



Creativity and
courage:
approaches
informed by
theory

Practicalities



Flexibility on location



Elasticity of boundaries



Confidentiality



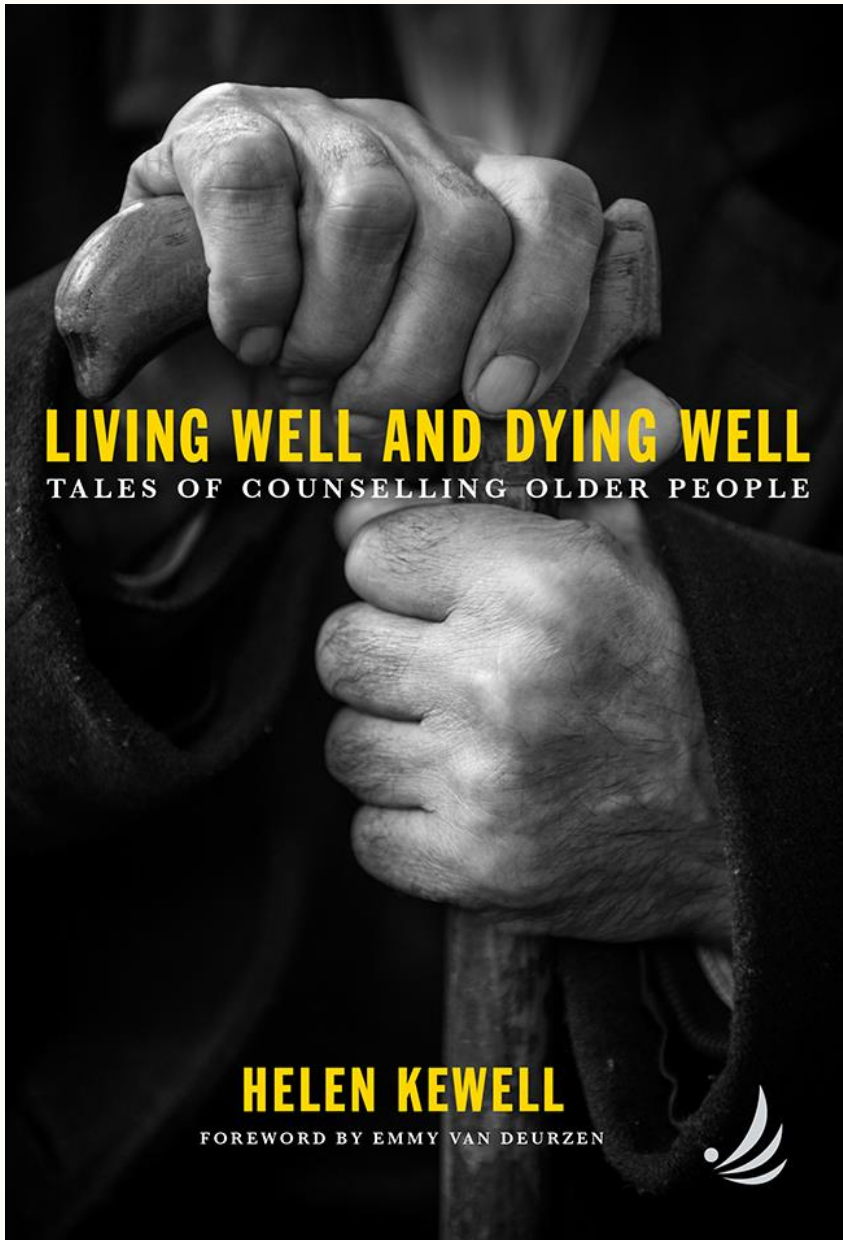
Working with contact impairment



Awareness of vulnerability



Robust supervision



Resources and further reading

- Atul Gawande ‘Being Mortal’
- Laura Carstensen ‘A Long Bright Future’
- Camilla Cavendish ‘Extra Time’
- Erikson and Erikson ‘Vital Involvement in Old Age’
- Simone de Beauvoir ‘Old Age’
- Robert Slater ‘The Psychology of Growing Old’
- Linda Viney ‘Life Stories’
- Danuta Lipinska ‘Person Centred Counselling for people with Dementia’
- Independent Age: <https://www.independentage.org/ageism-plus/mental-health>
- BACP: Older People CPD Hub
- <https://www.therapyminded.co.uk/clinical-dilemmas-when-working-with-older-clients/>