

NEAFCS Mary W. Wells Memorial Diversity Award Application 2021

The Aging Mastery Program Alleviates Ageism

Team Members:

Mary Ann Schilling
Associate Professor
Health Wellbeing Educator
PO Box 487
Wautoma, WI 54982
Waushara County
920-787-0416
maryann.schilling@wisc.edu

Renee Koenig
Associate Professor
Human Development Relationships Educator
810 Lincoln Street
Kewaunee, WI 54216
Kewaunee County
920-388-7137
renee.koenig@wisc.edu

Program Accomplishments

One of the fastest growing diversity groups in the U.S. is the aging population. Older individuals are not typically listed at the top of diversity groups but recent research on ageism has put a spotlight on the need to address this increasingly diverse population. Extension Educators, Koenig and Schilling have successfully pioneered the implementation of the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) in Wisconsin resulting in a viable intervention to support older individuals, improve their well-being and reduce the stigma of aging and ageism.

Emerging Issues and Significance

Ageism is defined as the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age. Research has shown that ageism has a negative impact on the health and well-being of older adults. The issue of ageism is predicted to magnify as the population of older adults grows. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 23% of the population is 60 or older and it is predicted to be 29% and even as high as 50% in some counties by the year 2040. The significance of ageism and an aging population is concerning because older adults experience higher rates of preventable disease such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression, social isolation and loneliness. Older individuals, particularly from rural communities, often face health disparities because of the prevalence of these illnesses among their age group. Since society largely views aging negatively, and the general belief is that health problems are inevitable as we age, the result is poorer health behaviors among older individuals. The Aging Mastery Program identifies this widely held false belief and aims to dispel the myths of aging.

According to well-known author and activist, Ashton Applewhite, “Discrimination is the problem, not aging.” This focus on reducing the problem of discrimination of age is one of the significant reasons that Koenig and Schilling are passionate about bringing AMP to the people of Wisconsin and beyond. AMP is not only a health program but it also reduces ageism and discrimination of older individuals by supporting positive views of aging and new healthy behaviors. An innovative approach that Koenig and Schilling incorporate in their AMP sessions is the inclusion of co-facilitators who are over the age of 55 as engaged partners with Extension. Koenig and Schilling coached and mentored AMP co-facilitators to help them become more confident workshop presenters. They encouraged older individuals to become more involved and influential in the planning and delivery of the AMP program. Their two main objectives are to: 1) implement AMP to improve the health and well-being of older adults, and 2) reduce the stigma of aging and ageism by involving older adults as engaged collaborators in the AMP planning and intervention. The primary target audience is community members over the age of 55.

Program Description

The Aging Mastery Program is an evidence-based program from the National Council on Aging. It aims to improve well-being through education and behavior modification interventions. It involves the following 10 topics on aging: 1) Navigating Longer Lives, 2) Exercise, 3) Sleep, 4) Healthy Eating and Hydration, 5) Medication Management, 6) Financial Fitness, 7) Advance Planning, 8) Healthy Relationships, 9) Falls Prevention and 10) Community Engagement. Up to 30 participants are enrolled in each AMP class. The class typically meets weekly for 10 weeks. Classes meet at community centers, county buildings, wellness centers, churches and virtually. All AMP classes emphasize the concept of mastery. Mastery means taking learning and turning it into behavior – developing sustainable behaviors across many dimensions that will lead to improved health, stronger financial security, enhanced well-being, and increased connectedness to communities. Each level of mastery is based on consistency and duration, allowing participants to set individual goals. AMP differs from other wellness programs in that it is expansive and holistic in its approach. A wide range of behaviors are studied from nutrition and fitness to relationships, finances and civic engagement. AMP also uses peer engagement and fun as key elements of the program.

In the past year, Koenig and Schilling implemented an additional key element in their Aging Mastery Programs to specifically address ageism. Their unique contribution to AMP involves a concerted effort to build the leadership and self-efficacy skills of co-facilitators who are over the age of 55. These co-facilitators have been named “Mastery Makers” to recognize their unique and important role in the success of AMP. The Mastery Makers are a critical addition to advancing AMP from an individual wellness program to an anti-ageism movement. How this works is Extension Educators interview and assess older community members who are interested in participating in community wellness efforts but lack confidence to co-facilitate AMP due to their stereotypical beliefs that they are too old to be an effective AMP leader or Mastery Maker. Extension Educators provide a training session on the topic of ageism and describe the Mastery Maker position. Then these applicants for the Mastery Maker position complete at least one AMP session as a co-facilitator and are awarded the Mastery Maker status. So far, more than 20 older adults have achieved the status of Mastery Makers in Wisconsin’s rural communities. The Mastery Makers are role models for other older adults. The Mastery Makers believe their own attitudes about aging and the views of others are more positive as a result of the AMP program. The Mastery Makers also report increases in their confidence to speak out about ageism.

Accomplishments and Program Impacts

Mary Ann Schilling was the first Extension Educator in Wisconsin to provide AMP. She piloted the program in partnership with the Department of Aging in Waushara County in 2015-2017 and she has continued to offer AMP every year since the pilot including the virtual format in 2020. Renee Koenig was the second Extension Educator to implement AMP in Wisconsin; she initially partnered with the Kewaunee Health Center in 2018 and continued the program with additional partner agencies through 2020. In the past five years over 200 participants in their two rural counties have completed the AMP program. Evaluation results from program participants support the value of AMP. Evaluation surveys are collected from all participants after the sessions and the results show:

80% said they learned new knowledge or skills

96% felt that AMP helped a great deal in improving their quality of life

98% said they felt AMP was fun!

98% reported that AMP was a good or excellent quality program.

An assessment process developed by Koenig and Schilling identified that the Mastery Makers believe their own attitudes about aging and the views of others are more positive as a result of becoming Mastery Makers for the AMP program. The Mastery Makers also report increases in their self-efficacy.

Additional impacts of AMP were identified in the communities. The city of Algoma in Kewaunee County received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize and brought the AMP program to their community because of Koenig's networking and partnership roles. There Extension has successfully advocated and promoted the AMP to health care professionals whereas a process has been developed to prescribe AMP to their patients for their wellness charts.

Schilling and Koenig implemented AMP to make a difference to residents in their rural counties by bringing opportunities for social connections, increased awareness of services and resources, and the chance to share experiences and implement new behaviors. Schilling delivered AMP during COVID-19 as a virtual format and has measured the benefits reaped from that experience by both educators and participants. These local educators overcame barriers to deliver AMP and have identified best practices for Extension colleagues to learn from their trailblazing experiences. Their accomplishments include creating awareness of ageism and age stereotypes, reduced negative views of aging, and increased self-efficacy of AMP co-facilitators as Mastery Makers who are over the age of 55. By involving older individuals in the leadership of the AMP program, Extension is helping to reduce ageism.

Future implications

After several successful sessions in their two rural counties, Koenig and Schilling disseminated their findings to their Extension colleagues in an effort to spread awareness of AMP as an effective educational program and as an intervention to reduce ageism. They presented at the University of Wisconsin Division of Extension Human Development and Relationships Institute and at the Wisconsin Joint Council of Extension Professionals conference in 2020. As a result of their presentations, they brought awareness of AMP to Extension leadership and colleagues. Their trailblazing efforts are helping Extension educators to implement AMP in additional counties in Wisconsin. Future plans are in place to disseminate their findings to national audiences.

Another future implication is for further research to examine the effectiveness of AMP as an ageism intervention. Extension is well-positioned to adapt and expand the use of Mastery Makers and other innovative aspects that will shift the focus of programs like AMP from individual wellness to large scale anti-ageism movements. Plans to present at national conferences will spearhead the efforts toward this end.

References:

- Applewhite, A. (2017, April). *Let's End Ageism*. [Video]. TED Conferences.
https://www.ted.com/talks/ashton_applewhite_let_s_end_ageism?language=en#t-671568
- Burnes, D., Sheppard, C., Henderson, C. R., Jr, Wassel, M., Cope, R., Barber, C., & Pillemer, K. (2019). Interventions to Reduce Ageism Against Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *American journal of public health, 109*(8), e1–e9.
<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305123>
- Chasteen, A. L., & Cary, L. A. (2015). *Age stereotypes and age stigma: Connections to research on subjective aging*. In M. Diehl & H.-W. Wahl (Eds.), *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics: Vol. 35. Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics, Vol. 35, 2015: Subjective aging: New developments and future directions* (p. 99–119). Springer Publishing Co.
- Farsetta, D. (2016, April 12). *Why Ageism Makes Us Sick*. Center for Aging and Research Education at the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Nursing.
<https://care.nursing.wisc.edu/2016/04/12/why-ageism-makes-us-sick/>

Letter of Support – attached below page 5

Supplementary Material – attached below Letter of Support

1. Evaluation Report
2. PowerPoint presentation developed by Koenig and Schilling



March 3, 2021

Dear NEAFCS Awards Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Renee Koenig and Mary Ann Schilling, Extension Educators for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension. I fully support their application for the Mary W. Wells Memorial Diversity Award. As the Life Span Outreach Program Manager for the University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension, I supervise the delivery of the Aging Mastery Program (AMP). Ms. Koenig and Ms. Schilling have successfully pioneered the implementation of AMP in two rural Wisconsin counties and have been instrumental in the expansion of the program to new areas of the state.

A priority area within the University of Wisconsin Division of Extension Life Span program is to educate community members and stakeholders on issues that affect older adults, including the impacts of ageism. Ms. Koenig and Ms. Schilling have identified a way to couple AMP as an anti-ageism intervention. We are grateful for their unique contributions to making some of the first steps to achieving the Life Span program's intended long-term outcome of reducing ageism within our communities. We highly recommend their application to receive the diversity award.

Thank you for your consideration of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension application for the Mary W. Wells Memorial Diversity Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara'.

Sara Richie, MS
Outreach Program Manager
Human Development and Relationships Institute
University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension



Aging Mastery Program® Making Aging Fun!

Forward Fridays, June 5, 2020

Renee Koenig, HDR Educator, Kewaunee County

Mary Ann Schilling, HWB Educator, Waushara County

Join the Adventure...It's a Game Changer!



The Aging Mastery Program®

A Comprehensive and Fun Approach to Living

- Combines education and goal-setting
- Daily practices
- Peer support to help
- Meaningful and enduring changes in health, finances, life enrichment, and advanced planning.
- Expert guest speakers



Aging Mastery Program®

- A National Council on Aging (NCOA) program
- 10-topics
- Adults age 55+
- 13 sites in Wisconsin in piloted
- HWBI, HDRI, & GWAAR training to implement throughout WI



Navigating Longer Lives: The Basics of Aging Mastery

The program and its philosophy

- ▶ A special emphasis on the new realities of aging
- ▶ Making the most of the gift of longevity
- ▶ Taking small steps to improve health, financial well-being, social connectedness, and overall quality of life.

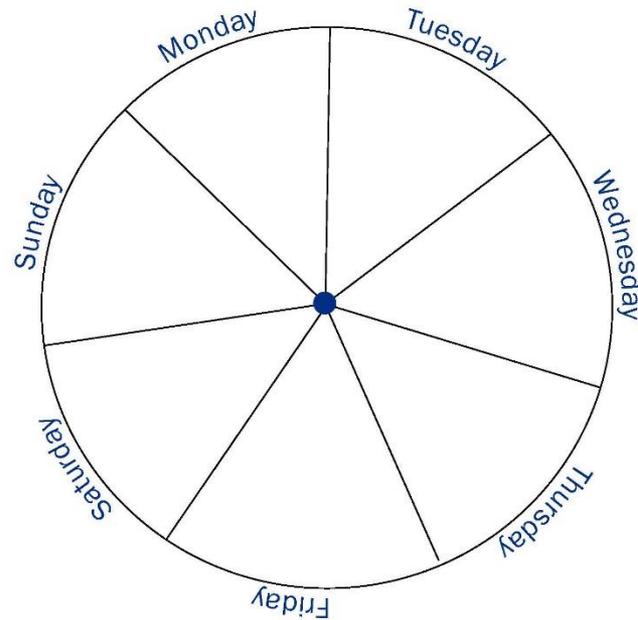


Wheel of Gratitude Activity

AGING MASTERY PROGRAM®: NAVIGATING LONGER LIVES

Wheel of Gratitude

For the next week, write three items in each "spoke" of your wheel. Each spoke represents a day of the week.



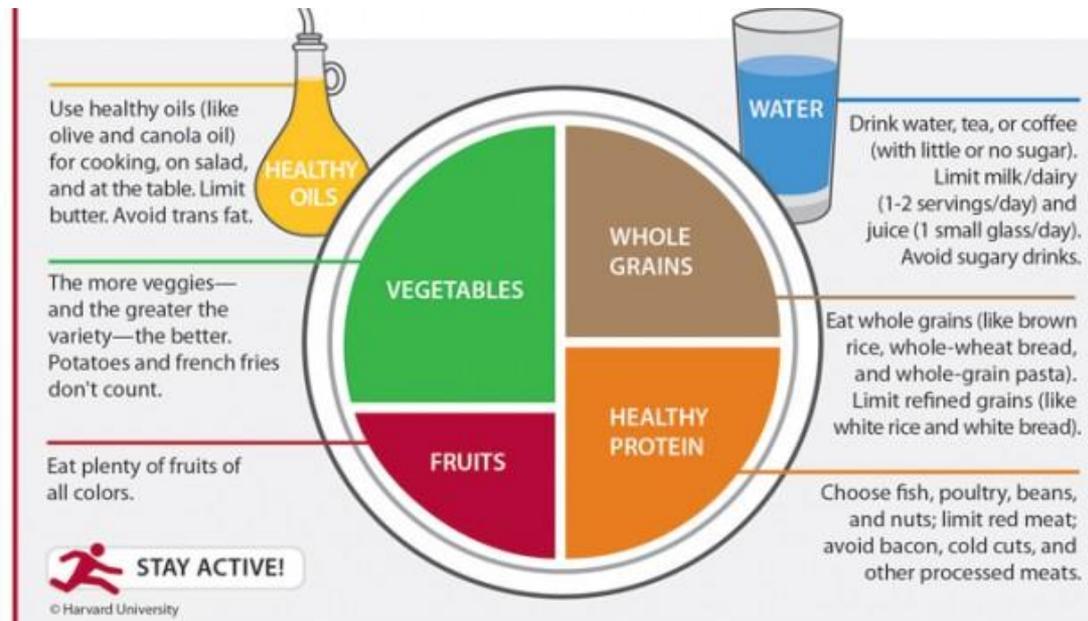
Exercise and You

- Exercising mind and body
 - Physical activity
 - Meditation and mindfulness
- Incorporating meditation, aerobic, strengthening, flexibility, and balance daily



Healthy Eating and Hydration

- Nutrition as it relates to aging
- Strategies for incorporating healthy eating and hydration into daily routines.



Medication Management

- Best practices
- Safe storage
- Track multiple medications



Sleep

- Sleep patterns change as we age
- The importance of monitoring the sleep cycle
- Simple strategies to improve sleep.



Financial Fitness

- Introduction to strategies for remaining economically secure in an era of longevity
- An emphasis on setting financial goals and setting financial boundaries with friends and families.



Healthy Relationships

- Exploration of the benefits of being socially active
- Exploration of the risks of isolation
- A focus on practical strategies for continuing to build and strengthen friendships and family connections as we age.
- Video “Friends” <https://www.happify.com/hd/have-we-forgotten-how-to-make-friends/>





Aging Mastery Program®: Role Play Practice Cards

Practice Cards

Role Play #1: Practice Being Assertive

You meet one of your friends at the senior center. They are going to skip this week's AMP session and want you to come along. You are interested in the speaker and don't want to skip. You decide to tell them you're not going to go with them.

Practice Cards

Role Play #2: Practice Being Assertive

Since you've retired, your daughter has been asking you to watch her children for longer and longer periods—often unannounced and for several days at a time. You love your grandchildren and are happy to help out occasionally, but had hoped for more time to fulfill some of your goals during retirement. You are worried that speaking up will make your daughter think you don't want to spend time with them at all, but still want to change the situation and make sure your daughter understands your needs.

Practice Cards

Role Play #3: Practice Active Listening and Empathy

Your friend's family recently asked him to stop driving and he has been feeling very blue. You know that he was struggling more with driving in the past year, but also understand why this loss of independence has been so hard. Talk to your friend about what happened and the family's decision.

Advance Planning

- Guidance around key steps needed to manage health care, financial, and housing/care decisions
- A focus on considering the role of personal values and beliefs in these decisions.



Fall Prevention

- Overview of the importance of fall prevention among older adults
- Strategies to prevent falling



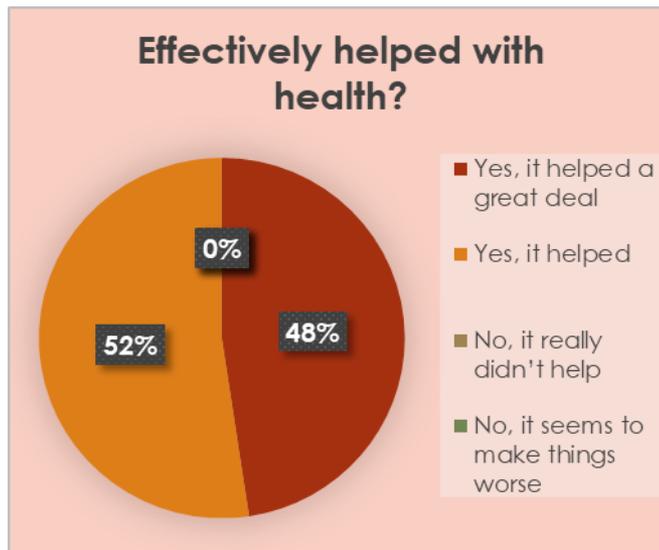
Community Engagement

- ▶ Value of continuing contributions
- ▶ Small acts of kindness
- ▶ Identifying personal abilities for meaningful volunteer and civic opportunities.



Evaluation

- Implemented daily practices in exercise, medication management, fall prevention, and community engagement
- Learned from speakers and activities
- Enjoy small group discussion and connections with participants



Lessons Learned

- ▶ Ask guest speakers to present 20-30 minutes
- ▶ Introduce prizes for point system early in program
- ▶ Encourage class to meet new participants through small group activities
- ▶ Participants are active in the community and interested in learning about opportunities



Thank you!

Resources:

- <https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/aging-mastery-program/aging-mastery-program-core-curriculum/>
- <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity>

For more information contact:

Renee.Koenig@wisc.edu or maryann.schilling@wisc.edu.



Aging Mastery Program – Koenig and Schilling, University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension

Knowledge and Behavior Change (n=336)		MN	WA	WI	Total
Navigating Longer Lives		%	%	%	%
	Learned something new	85.4	83.8	92.2	87.2
	Name specific steps	82.6	91.2	88	87.5
	Personally taken new steps	75.8	82.5	83.8	80.9
	Described action taken**	48.1	66.1	68.5	61.3
Exercise and You					
	Learned something new	78	85.2	85.1	83
	Name specific steps	88.3	91.3	89	89.6
	Personally taken new steps	79.6	79.6	79.8	79.7
	Described action taken	58.7	73.6	70.3	67.9
Sleep					
	Learned something new	87	78	84.5	83.1
	Name specific steps	87.9	86	84.2	86
	Personally taken new steps	65.6	72.4	77	71.9
	Described action taken	54.8	65.3	69.4	63.4
Healthy Eating and Hydration					
	Learned something new	81.1	80.8	85.7	82.6
	Name specific steps	83.5	89.1	92.2	88.5
	Personally taken new steps	79.1	81.4	88.2	83.1
	Described action taken**	60.6	76	82.9	73.5
Financial Fitness					
	Learned something new	59.8	50.5	57	55.5
	Name specific steps	62.8	58.8	55.3	58.9
	Personally taken new steps	51.1	40.4	49.5	46.7
	Described action taken	43.3	54.5	52.3	50.3
Advance Planning					
	Learned something new	84.6	84	76.8	81.8
	Name specific steps	90	87	83.2	86.7
	Personally taken new steps	62	59.4	52.7	58.1
	Described action taken*	51.9	67.8	59.5	60.1
Healthy Relationships					
	Learned something new*	90	79.4	89.7	86
	Name specific steps	82.8	84	90.6	85.7
	Personally taken new steps	69.3	69.6	76.2	71.5
	Described action taken	49	60.3	60.4	56.8
Medication Management					
	Learned something new*	85.9	70.8	82.8	79.3

	Name specific steps	82.4	74.5	80.8	79
	Personally taken new steps	63.2	54.5	64.6	60.6
	Described action taken	49.2	65.3	60.4	59.9
Community Engagement					
	Learned something new	82.6	79.2	82.2	81.3
	Name specific steps	85.6	85.8	84	85.1
	Personally taken new steps	60.7	68.7	57.7	62.5
	Described action taken	52.9	67.8	61.3	61
Falls Prevention					
	Learned something new	89.3	80	85.3	84.5
	Name specific steps	91.9	92.4	92.6	92.3
	Personally taken new steps	82.1	79.8	80.6	80.8
	Described action taken**	53.4	72.7	73.9	67.2

** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$