

COMMUNICATIONAL BASICS AND FEATURES OF ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR OF THE THIRD-AGE PEOPLE

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As the advanced age has come, the level of vital activity decreases, self-perception changes and self-esteem becomes lower. People of such age often feel that their life has no sense. They are also depressed by the financial difficulties. However, social problems are of utmost importance at the advanced age, since social relations are changing greatly after the retirement.

Typical problems of the elderly and their influence on them:

- social circle is usually greatly reduced after retirement. People of the advanced age suffer from loneliness, they often have no one to chat with, to share their feelings and thoughts. They want to feel somebody's concern, but do not get it;
- retired persons are often faced with disrespect, brutal and disdainful treatment. Many younger people often negatively treat the elderly, considering them a burden for themselves and for the society;
- with the death of their friends and age mates, pensioners receive a great blow. Their social circle becomes even more limited, leaving a strong sense that life has come to an end.

These social problems of the elderly have a great influence on their emotional state and well-being.

Change of the regular way of life is a critical moment in the life of an elderly person. Unpredictable situations, new people, unusual circumstances, obscurity of social status – these life circumstances force a person not only to adapt to the surrounding environment, but also to react to changes within himself. The elderly people are faced with a question of estimating themselves, their opportunities under new conditions. The process of personal adjustment is very painful and difficult. It is known that at the advanced age the defective memory and loss of alertness, decrease of ability to be aware of a new situation, anxious mood and emotional lability are observed. One of the main features of the elderly is the psychological vulnerability and the growing inability to deal with various stress. Therefore, people of the advanced age are characterized by their special sensitivity to getting the attention, moral and psychological support.

The best way to help the elderly person is to provide him with constant support and a circle of communication, teach him something new and interesting. It is an important part of social work with the elderly.

The research on the personal, cognitive and cultural potential of the older generation proves that under certain circumstances their ability to study even rises

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instead of decreasing. The need to involve the elderly into the educational process is, first of all, due to a number of socio-demographic factors [1-4].

The elderly people who do not have relatives, close friends, are more likely to demonstrate uncertain or aggressive behavior. That is why development of assertive behavior skills is very important for successful social and psychological adaptation of the elderly. Social workers of the Third Age Universities are obliged, whenever possible, to develop the skills of a confident refusal in safe situations among the elderly during special training workshops. Most commonly, the uncertainty manifests itself, as uncommunicativeness, shyness, calmness, and intimidation. The main thing in the work of social specialists is to direct the activities of the elderly and to regulate their interpersonal relationships. Communication is valuable when it causes the need to share thoughts, promotes the manifestation of attention and sympathy to others. Since older people do not have enough experience in effective interaction with social workers and other elderly people within the third age universities, they accordingly have no confidence in their own efficiency. In addition, such lack of confidence is often associated with human health. The state of human health is of particular importance in the process of education; loss of hearing and reduction of visual acuity is an obstacle in getting new knowledge and skills.

We conducted the research from January 2017 till July 2018. Participants were 284 people aged 61 years and older [4; 5]. A special program was developed to promote the skills of adapting to new conditions.

The “Self-improvement” training program has several directions: foreign language education and development of information competence for the elderly. The program creates conditions for psychological and pedagogical support and self-development of the elderly. Defining the priorities for the formation of assertive behavior of the elderly, we can distinguish the ability to surf in the world information resources and promptly find all the necessary information. In this regard, within the “Self-improvement” course the following special courses are introduced: “Computer fundamentals”, “Digital lifestyle and effective communication”.

In terms of our research we also studied the way the English language courses for the elderly are organized within the Third Age University. In 2017 750 elderly people were registered for training, 310 of them started to attend classes, and 213 attended all the classes [5].

The analysis of the questionnaires of the experiment participants showed that the vast majority of the elderly people chose English language courses in order to communicate with other people (65%), 25% for personal development and 10% – to maintain proactive approach to life.

It was found that the elderly people with assertive behavior are independent and self-sufficient, which is manifested in various life spheres, but most obviously – in the sphere of interpersonal relations, in communicative situations (the ability to freely express thoughts, feelings, communication at all levels).

Especially important for the third-age University students is the simulation of conditions for self-confidence development. That is why, the optimum conditions for this are created within the course “Self-Improvement”, which helps to increase the

number of possible patterns of behavior, develops communicative skills of the elderly and promotes correction of interpersonal relations, and their social adaptation. Thus, after completion of the course, the group admitted the loss of situational and personal anxiety, as well as an increase in the level of assertive behavior.

Modern research proves that the ability to learn among the elderly, in particular the acquisition of a foreign language and computer literacy, under certain conditions even rises instead of decreasing. One of these conditions is overcoming the age-related stereotypes. Thus, there is a hypothesis that the brain of an elderly person loses the ability to build new relationships. This very hypothesis was widely used to explain the difficulty of mastering foreign languages and information technologies by the people of advanced age. Some of the provisions of this hypothesis can be found even nowadays, although neuroscientists have proved that under certain conditions, the elderly can study and acquire new knowledge even better than at a young age. One of the important conditions for teaching the elderly is taking into account the age peculiarities and state of health, the assertiveness of the individual, clear definition of the purpose and the need for communication, the use of information and communication technologies in everyday life.

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