Hi everyone and thank you for being here for the presentation of Accepting Aging: Yourself and Others. My name is Shannon; I will be the facilitator today.

So, let's begin. So, a couple of learning objectives for today: understanding why many people fear aging, exploring ways to shift your perspective, considering ways to embrace aging, and developing your own plan for accepting aging.

OK, so now, I just want you to think about which letter would best represent, eh, your answer to these questions: How do you feel about the process of aging? A, apprehensive; B, angry; C, sad; D, positive; E, excited; F, other, so, any other emotion. It can also be a combination of things, obviously, eh, but which one you feel is most common for you.

So, gerascophobia. This is the fear of growing old or of old age. There are several symptoms such as the following: irrational fear of growing old; feeling of panic, anxiety, terror, or dread; physical reactions such as rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, trembling; and extreme avoidance, eh, measures taken against aging.

Why we often fear aging? So, Celestine Shaw discusses six main reasons for people having a fear of aging, and these are the following.

So, there's being undesirable: Sickness, pain, suffering, being less than we should be, fear of loss, being alone, and death, and we'll go up through all of them.

Eh, so, being undesirable. Most see fine lines and wrinkles, brown lines, laugh lines, sagging skin, et cetera, with a sense of negativity. These are linked with the word ugly. This seems to apply to females more often than not, and that is thanks to marketers who spend billions in advertising every year to reinforce negativity in the notion of looking old. So, it leads to continual sales for their anti-aging products. The anti-aging consumer goods category continue to grow yearly. A campaign attempted to move away from that, but, even then we are still bombarded by the whole industry, which is still entrenched in a certain notion of beauty.

Sickness, pain, suffering: So, with old age comes increased probability of sickness, decreased physical ability, medical conditions such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, cancer, et cetera, and these are things that come hand-in-hand with pain and suffering.
Being lesser than we should be: All of us have goals and dreams—when you were younger, you would consciously or unconsciously envisioned yourself being somewhere at a certain age, and maybe to earn a lot of money, achieve a certain amount of success, and have a family. Reaching a certain age reminds you of your vision and simultaneously triggers the realization that they are not where they want to be. This realization can be quite painful for some.

Fear of loss: Growing older comes with loss, seeing people pass away, losing what they have now, losing their youth, losing their health.

Being alone: People see old people as a burden, and they try to avoid them. For example, my grandmother is in her nineties, and she has over ten children. When it comes to taking care of her, all of them try shifting responsibility to someone or other, giving reasons like they are too busy. Old age tends to bring solitude.

Death: Eh, so, ultimately, what's the end of our physical existence? Death. People fear death. Death means losing everything we have, everything we built, and it also means the end of our existence.

The importance of acceptance: How do you—how do your fears about aging affect you? What do you achieve by worrying about it? I want you to take of couple of minutes to just think about these questions. How do your fears about aging affect you? On a day to day or any time that this, you know, thought comes up. And what do you achieve by worrying about it? So, what do you do when, you know, find yourself worrying about fears of aging? What does that give you? I'm just going to give you a couple of minutes to think about that. Perhaps, jot down some thoughts and feelings.

OK? So, whether you spend one minute entertaining the thought or one hour, one day, one month, one year, ten years, you're still going to grow older. Time will pass. The sun will continue to set and rise. Earth will rotate on its own axis. Ocean tides will rise and fall dependent on the gravitational pulls from the moon. Flowers will bloom and wilt. Life will still go on. And you aren't the only person in this world growing older. Everyone else is growing older too. Celebrities like Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts is growing older, your friends are growing older, people around you are growing older. In brief, growing older is part of life. Embrace that lines are going to form, that your physical body is going to deteriorate, and, unfortunately, eventually die. Rather than fight it, accept that it's going to happen. You cannot change the fact that you and your loved ones will become older, it's
just how life goes. Stressing about the fact will only harm your health and tire you out.

So, again, a couple of questions to consider: instead of thinking what you could have done before, you think about what you can do now. Instead of investing time and things outside of your control, you focus on what you can influence instead. And, instead of living in an illusion, you start living your life properly. So, I'm going to repeat that again, you know, instead of thinking what you could have done before, you think about what you can do now. Instead of investing time and things outside of your control, focus on what you can influence. And, instead of living in an illusion, you start living your life properly, adjust your life to what it is. And Celestine Shaw suggests asking yourself some reflective questions to consider what you can do to shift your perspective. So, here on the slide, you will see some questions for you to think about: What can you start doing today to maximize your experience of life? What can you start doing today that will make you feel better about yourself? What can you start doing today to increase your happiness and fulfillment of your life? What can you start doing today to really be living life to its fullest? And what can you start doing which will make you look back and think, Wow, I can't think of a better way to have lived my life? Again, just a couple of minutes, jot some ideas down in regard to these questions. Think of these questions, wrote down your thoughts, your ideas, your feelings, eh, just try and answer these questions for your own self.

Here are a lot of questions to think about. I really will give you like three to five minutes to think this through. Answer these questions as best as you can. Try and go through every single question one or two minutes.

OK, I hope that you all, eh, got the chance to jot down a good plan. So, moving forward. "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." That's Mark Twain.

In an article on Psychology Today, the phrase "Conscious Aging" is referred to by Stephen, eh, Richardson as a new way of looking at and experiencing aging that moves beyond our cultural obsession with youth towards a respect and need for the wisdom of age. He emphasizes the need to recognize and accept the aging process and all that goes with it as a reality, a natural part of the life cycle, and that it just happens to us all. The goal is to change the prevailing view of aging as something to be feared and the aged as worthless. Reverse our societal attitude
of aging as an affliction, and instead of spending billions on walling off the aging, spend more time to improve the quality of life among the seniors.

How to embrace aging. The Institute of Aging offers some three, some hot tips for embracing the aging process—those three here. Accept that life is different. This isn't a bad thing; it is a liberating understanding, accepting that there are differences in limitations and possibility means being able to work with them, within them to the fullest. Figure out what you want. That sounds very simple, but it is crucial. Once you know who you are, you can think about your goals for the next five, or ten, or twenty years. Do you want to finally read Proust, or see the Serengeti, " or do you want to be a grandmother that her grandkids? Knowing what you want to do is the most important step for achieving it. Take risks and be flexible. When we're young, we're not afraid to fail, even though the consequences might follow us for decades. When we get older, we get more risk averse, that doesn't always make sense. No one thinks you should cash out your life savings to put it all, to put it all on black or take up freestyle wall climbing, but you have the freedom, maybe for the first time, to take real chances with trying new things. You don't have to say, "This isn't something I'd ever do." You can say, "This isn't something I'd ever do before now."

You can make a radical shift toward embracing the gifts of aging. Here's seven ways to create positive and wonderful aging process from belief. First, cultivate your relationships. The older we get, the more crucial it is that we matter to someone and feel a sense of connection to at least one important person in our life. Whether they are family or friends, if you stay in regular contact with those you're close with, calling them regularly and hanging with them in tough times, they will relate not to how you look, which of course, will change, but what you are deep inside. Harsh experience will always hurt but friends who stand by us shield us from the impact. In their company, we find a place full of peace and love.

Connect with your spirituality. We need to be in touch with more than just our day-to-day routine and reality. As a poet, Gerald Manley Hopkins, said, "There lives the deepest freshness deep down things." We very much need constant contact with that freshness in life whether it is through meditation, prayer or humble personal experiences that show us how human we are. We can all find that sense of meaning in life that goes beyond ourselves and gives us an inner refuge and home.
Make a difference. As Mother Teresa always used to say, "The world is hungry for our help and our love. Animals, people, and the earth all need our service." Choosing a field, you can best help in, we tap into our inner power and ask to make a difference in life.

Protect your health. We all know that eating a healthy diet from all the food groups sharpens our body and helps prevent disease, and appropriate, natural exercise renews us both mentally and physically. Try not obsessing with perfect health or fear sickness. Do what you need to do to and then relax into a vastness deeper than yourself, the wellbeing fostered by your connection to the universe.

Exercise your intellect. As we read widely and listen well, we will continue to relate widely to diverse people and opinions. Our inner life will be richer and be better as we understand our past, and with and with curiosity and discipline, learn, accept and build on new things discipline, learn, accept, and build on new things.

Nurture your creativity. Nourishing a sense of connection to the beauty and goodness of the universe, we cast our own powers of making new things and finding new solutions. Whether it is in art, gardening, writing, crafting, or in a relationship, we feel that something great has filled us, passed through our mind and makes the universe and ourselves richer and more beautiful.

Rejoice in nature. As you walk, hike, or relax at the seashore, take the time to breathe deeply and take the beauty of forest, mountains, and lakes into your heart. As the years pass, such connection with nature will give all of us a sense of being grounded and something stable and yet magical, relaxing into nourishment and support from the greater universe.

And, lastly, build your legacy. All of us have to work to make a living, but with every other minute available, try to channel your actions into what will outlast you, and build your legacy. It may be the trees you plant or the art you paint, sculpt, write, or build, or the minds you enrich. Age matters less when you pour yourself into people and things that will in their own way continue on. It is our job to search this out and put our efforts there. If we do this, we may not even realize we're growing old.

"Aging is an extraordinary process whereby you become the person you always should have been"—David Bowie. Growing older isn't about becoming someone new, it's about recognizing that there is always more of the world and of yourself
to explore. It's a time to develop new interests and expand on those who may not have had time for before. It's about taking your experience and building on it and knowing that you never have to give up finding new and exciting things just because you are growing older.

OK, I want you to take some time after this session to reflect. Write five things you have learned in your life so far. Write five things you are grateful for in your life right now, five things you have achieved in your life, and five things that you want to achieve in the future. Just going to give you a minute to write these down and to think about later.

There are five places in the world where people live longer than anywhere else. Known as the Blue Zones, they include Ikaria, Greece, Loma Linda, California, Sardinia, Italy, Okinawa, Japan, and Nicoya, Costa Rica. Researchers Gianni Pes and Michel Poulin discovered that Sardinia has the most male centenarians. They wrote about this for the journal of Experimental Gerontology. Founder of Blue Zones, Dan Buettner decided to see if there were other hot spots like Sardinia. In collaboration with the demographers and researchers, Buettner identified nine specific lifestyle habits of the Blue Zone. Eh, so, they move naturally—people in the Blue Zones live in areas that push them to move without thinking much about it; their exercise includes activities like gardening.

Purpose. Called Ikigai by the Okinawans, this is your reason for getting up in the morning. Find it and you'll live about seven years longer.

Manage stress. Eh, so, learn how to manage stress. The people in the Blue Zones touch down to pray, remember their ancestors, take naps, or engage in happy hour.

Eighty percent rule. That means stop eating before you're full. Eat your smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening, and don't eat anything else. This is how Blue Zone people live longer; they control their weight.

Eat more beans. Some people in the Blue Zones eat pork but not more than a handful of times in a month. So, there's highly, eh, their diets consist highly of beans, plants.

Eh, minimal alcohol. So, [inaudible, audio 24:41]. Buettner discovered that everyone in the Blue Zones, except Adventists, drink alcohol, but they drink one or two glasses a day with friends and/or with food.
Eh, sense of belonging. Most of the centenarians belong to a faith-based community. The research shows that attending services four times per month adds four to fourteen years to your life.

Put loved ones first. Blue Zone people put their family and their partners first. Aging parents and grandparents often live in the same home with their children or nearby. This lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home.

And, create a tribe. Centenarians either achieve in social circles or are born into them and those circles support healthy behaviors.

Things to consider. Author of the book "Not Fade Away" by Alan Heeks states that there are significant ways that we can all stay positive about the aging process, and these are a couple: maintain a positive outlook. We all have to face losses and downsides as we get older. On top of this, the shear pace, complexity, and technologies of everyday life can get you down, further aggravated by the constant barrage of new advertisement in social media, leaving us feeling overwhelmed and powerless. How do you stay happy in spite of all these pressures pulling the other way? The basic point is that we all have to continually choose to believe in the positive about ourselves, other people, and the world in general. Try to keep noticing your thoughts and feelings, and keep choosing positive ones, like gratitude and appreciation for all the good things about yourself in your life.

Embrace your fears. Getting older, most people are likely to slow down, either from choice or necessity. For many, this slowing down creates a space where obitual fears to come up more strongly. Confront your fears and the reasons for them so that you can overcome them.

Create cheerful daily habits. Habits are a great way to ensure you keep making the positive choices you need. Here are some examples: continue to take time in your day to express gratitude for the good things in your life, try to bring humor into your daily life by enjoying some comedy, eh, or maybe watching a great film, get outdoors, eh, and, to make sure it lifts your spirit and it's good for your health, take a brisk walk, ride a bike, or engage into some outdoor activity every day. Treat problems as an adventure. It's easy to get down and feel like a victim when we have problems with health or in other parts of your life. Choose to believe that there's a gift and upside in most problems if you can find it. Treat these difficulties the same way you prepare for an adventure holiday. Gather maps and other
information, look for a good guide, and treat the new learning you need as an interesting challenge. Look up for any new opening that may arise.

Explore "elderhood." Our modern society gives us few useful guidelines about growing old positively. We have to figure this out for ourselves. I'm using the term "elderhood" to invite you to connect to the mature wisdom in yourself and in our ancestors. The old tribal cultures such as The Celts and Native Americans saw the elders as playing vital roles in the tribe. It was the elders' role to guide the tribe in a crisis, to dream dreams, uphold values, mentor the young, and speak true as they saw it. Clearly, we live in a different kind of society, but the role of elders is something we can learn from and update.

Be more conscious of your values. With modern life being so hectic and distracting, becoming more aware of your values and choosing to live by them more deliberately can be of real service to your wellbeing. It's also a gift to those around you, including the younger generation. Values can be everyday ones, like honesty, integrity, and care for others and choosing to respond positively to the apparently hopeless state of the world.

Last, but not least, cultivate your people skills. Many research studies show that it's our ability to express fear and work with feelings that is far more beneficial to our "personal work-life than intellect or brain power." Reach out. If you find yourself feeling anxious about aging, talk to someone. Open up to friends, family. Use the support available with your organization such as your Employee Assistance Program, eh, and just remember, there's help available and you are not alone.

OK, last, moving forward, consider the questions we looked at earlier and the training. What can you start doing today that will make you feel more positive about the aging process? What can you start doing that will make you look back and think that you could not have thought of a better way to live your life?

Again, for additional assistance, just contact your Employee Assistance Program available through many different mediums, 24/7, eh, if anything, if you want to talk, eh, and explore this a little bit more or just for anything else in general.

Thank you for being here, for being present. I hope that you've got new information from this presentation and that you, you, answered all those questions that can help you to move forward. Thank you for being here.