

# AGING RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT on LEISURE



Dr. Brad A. Meisner

This year, YU-CARE Steering Committee member [Brad A. Meisner](#) from the School of Kinesiology and Health Science has significantly contributed to studying the important relationships between leisure and community activities and healthy aging.

Meisner's studies, linked below, argue that the meaningful inclusion and involvement of older adults in leisure and community activities are undervalued and underused strategies to promote healthy aging, particularly in late life. His research identifies both motivators and constraints that inspire and inhibit older adult activity participation. It is important to recognize

that many of these motivators and constraints are in fact beyond the control of older individuals; yet, these factors support or suppress health-related outcomes over time.

Critically, the investigation of this theme by Meisner and colleagues stimulates dialogue about age discrimination (ageism) experienced by older adults during leisure and community activities as a significant barrier, which, in turn, negatively affects healthy aging.

Read the abstracts of Meisner's published research below or follow the journal links to access the complete articles.

## Abstracts

*Taking 'Steps to Connect' to later life: Exploring leisure program participation among older adults in rural communities (Meisner, B.A., Hutchinson, S.L., Gallant, K.A., Lauckner, H., & Stilwell, C.L., 2019), [Society and Leisure](#).*

Abstract: "Steps to Connect is a leisure education program that facilitates participation in leisure activities to enable individuals to connect to themselves, to others around them, and to their communities. The authors' previous program development efforts were focused

on individuals with chronic conditions in rural settings, and now there is interest in adapting it for older adults. As such, the authors explored the perceptions and constraints associated with tailoring leisure activities and programs to older adults living in rural Nova Scotia, Canada. They conducted five focus groups in four rural communities, including 33 participants aged 60+ years. Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts revealed participants' awareness of how leisure programs promote physical and mental health, social participation, as well as meaningful personal and community experiences. Participants also identified several leisure constraint themes that warrant consideration when implementing leisure programs to promote active aging among older adults living in rural communities, such as *Steps to Connect*."

*Perceptions of aging and experiences of ageism as constraining factors of moderate to vigorous leisure-time physical activity in later life (Massie, A.S., & Meisner, B.A., 2019), [Society and Leisure](#).*

**Abstract:** "Later-life leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) is an identified way to promote active aging. Nevertheless, many active older adults experience LTPA constraints and thus may not experience the full comprehensive health benefits that result from participation. This study explored two potential LTPA constraints pertaining specifically to 'age': beliefs that older adults have about aging (perceptions of aging) and experiences of being treated differently because of age (ageism). One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 older adults (60–74 years) who engaged in an average of  $\geq 150$  minutes of moderate to vigorous LTPA per week. Data underwent thematic analysis that resulted in three

themes pertaining to LTPA: (a) 'age has nothing to do with it,' (b) 'but they do treat us different here,' and (c) 'why don't we have an exercise class?' Findings provide new perspectives on how aging perceptions and ageism – in both negative and positive forms – can affect LTPA engagement in later life."

*What is and isn't working: Factors involved in sustaining community-based health and participation initiatives for people ageing with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Spassiani, N.A., Meisner, B.A., Abou Chacra, M.S., Heller, T., & Hammel, J., 2019), [Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities](#).*

**Abstract:** "As people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) age, it is important that I/DD agencies are prepared to support healthy ageing in homes and in communities. This study explored supports and barriers to sustaining community-based health and participation initiatives (CBHPI) for people ageing with I/DD living in group homes managed by agencies. The study utilized interviews and photovoice with 70 participants—35 individuals with I/DD and 35 management/direct support agency staff. Data were analysed through content analysis and triangulation of data where five themes emerged: Agency values and policies related to healthy ageing; resources and staff competencies; communication between management and staff; community/university partnerships; and peer relations. Findings show that I/DD agencies and people with I/DD value CBHPI, but they find them difficult to sustain due to limited resources and lack of training specific to ageing with I/DD. Conducting system-level research within I/DD agencies to include first-person accounts of people

with I/DD, staff and management provides insight on how to effectively support the needs of people with I/DD to improve their health and community participation as they age.”

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*Mindful aging: The association between trait mindfulness and expectations regarding aging among middle-aged and older adults (Fiocco, A.J. & Meisner, B.A., 2019), [Aging and Mental Health](#).*

**Abstract:** “Objectives: Positive Expectations Regarding Aging serve as a protective factor of healthy aging; however, negative stereotypes regarding aging continue to dominate popular aging discourse. It is proposed that trait mindfulness (TM) is associated with aging expectations through the cultivation of openness, curiosity, and non-judgment to one’s thoughts, emotions, and sensations, whether they are positive or negative.

**Methods:** Associations between the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire and the Expectations Regarding Aging Survey (ERA-38) were examined among 201 participants aged 55+ years.

**Results:** Analyses revealed that higher levels of TM was significantly associated with positive aging expectations, controlling for retirement and socioeconomic status ( $R^2 = 14.0\%$ ,  $F(5,192) = 7.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Conclusion:** The development of TM, notably the facet of non-judgment, may be used to promote positive aging expectations to help support healthy aging.”