

Positive ageing:

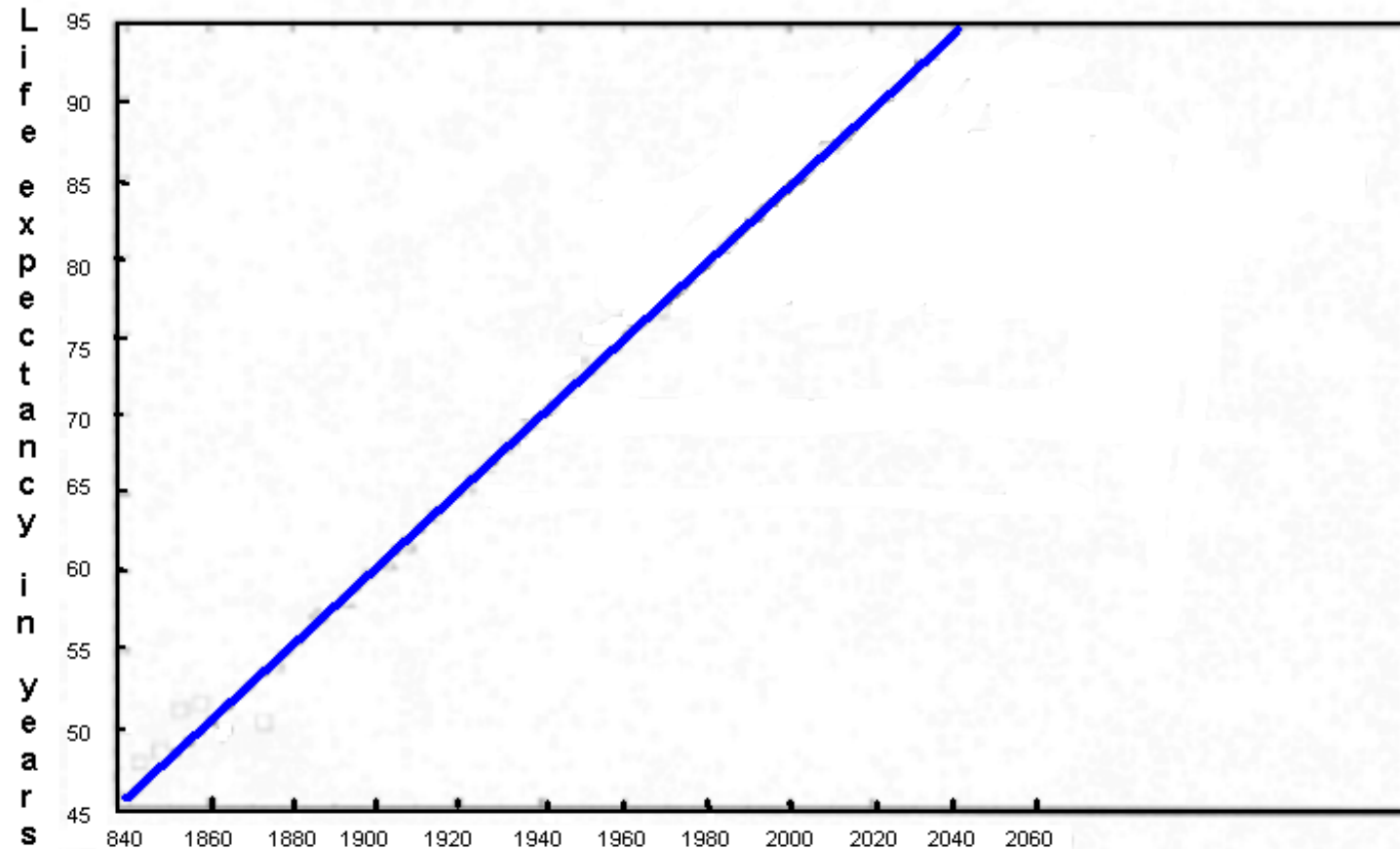
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of Cambridge



The remarkable rise in life expectancy

Based on Oeppen & Vaupel, Science, 2002



Female life expectancy in the record-holding country, 1840-2000:

Paradox of Retirement

- When statutory retirement and the state pension were introduced, few people lived long enough to retire.
- Now people are spending a quarter of their life in the post-retirement phase.



“See, the problem with doing things to prolong your life is that all the extra years come at the end, when you’re old.”

The ageing process

Biological ageing produces a series of challenges to which we have to adapt:

- physical ability
- sensory function
- mental capability

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Adaptation is influenced by our attitudes and our environment

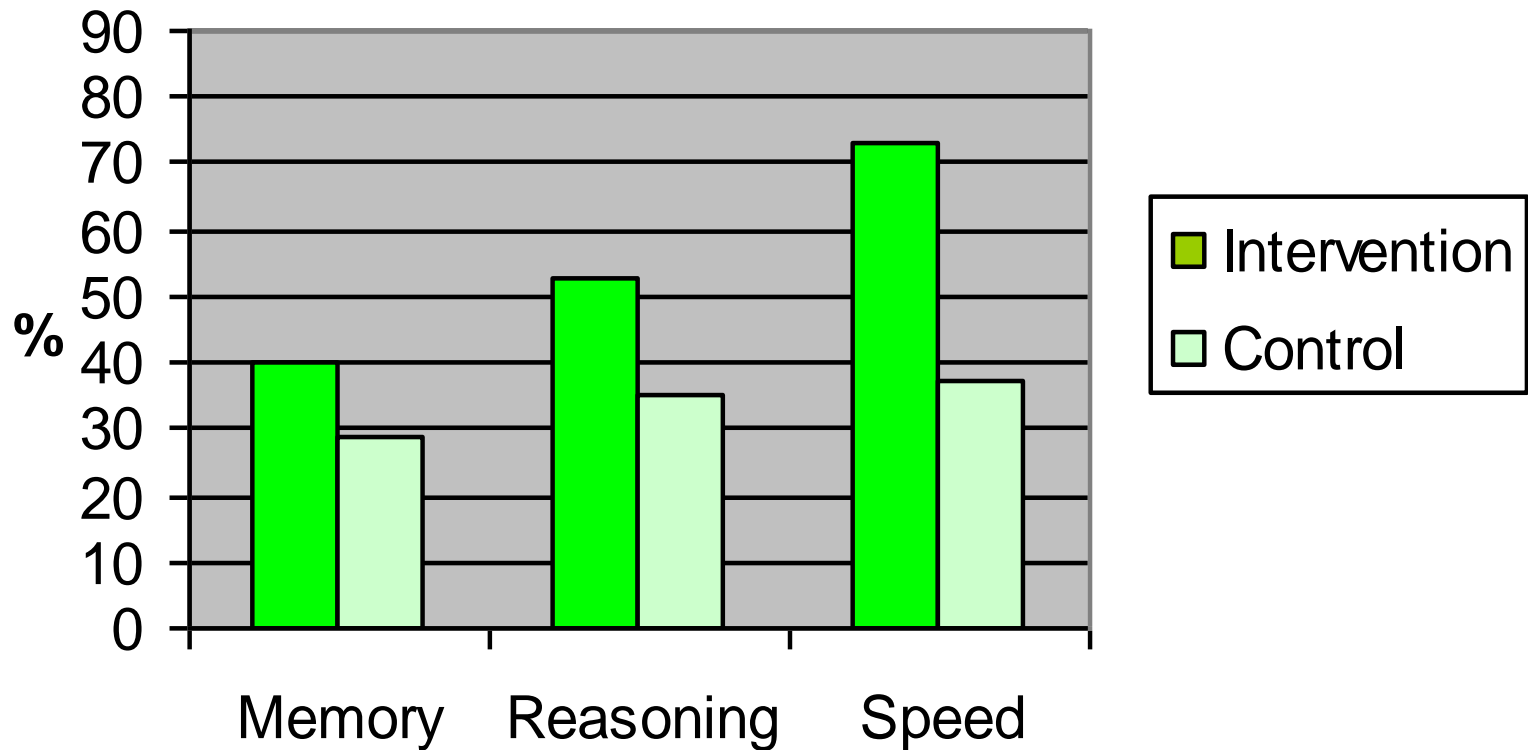


The need for Inclusive Design

- It's normal to be different
- Design can be enabling or disabling
- Inclusive design is good design

Effects of cognitive training with older adults

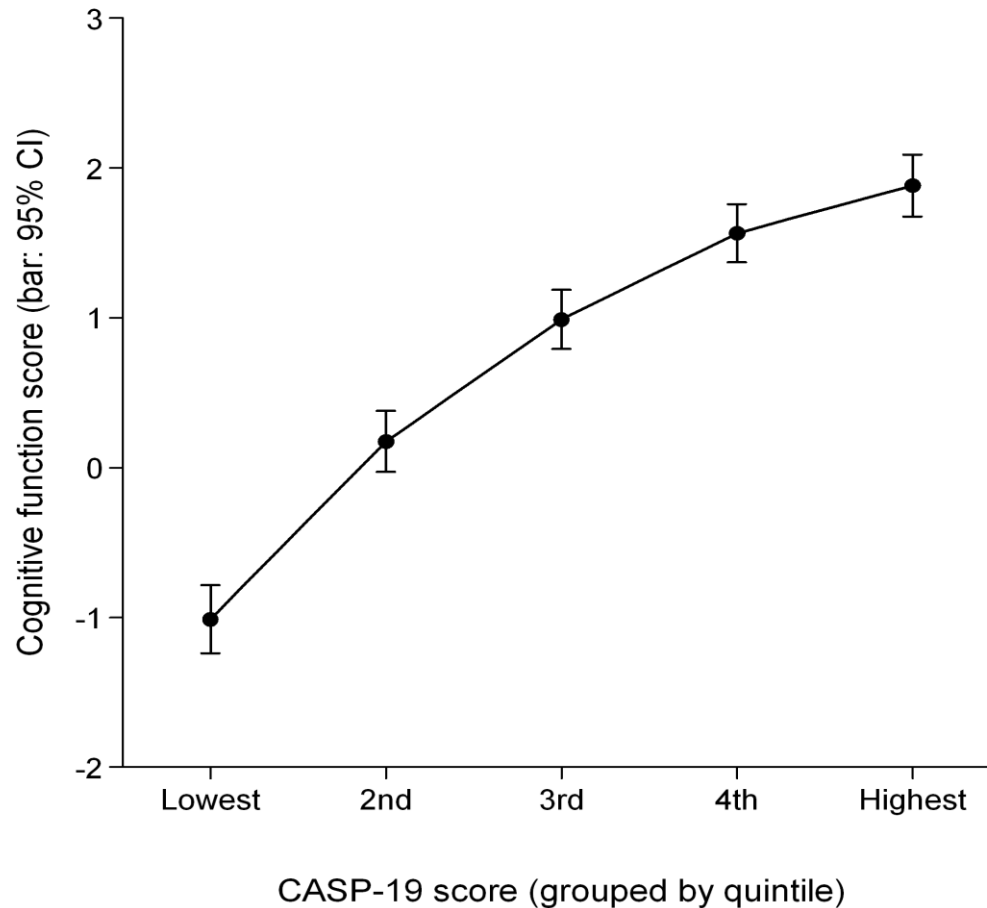
Results of the ACTIVE trial, 2002 (n = 2832, aged 65-94)



Percent showing reliable improvement at 2 years

Association between psychological well-being and cognitive function

English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)



Positive mental states broaden and build cognitive processes

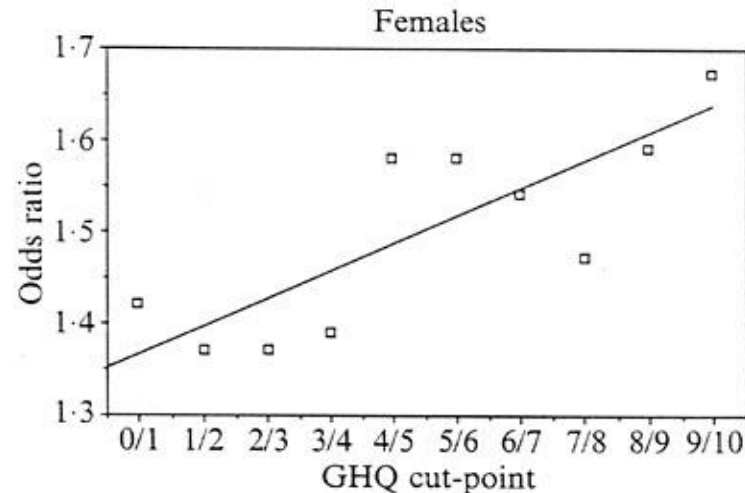
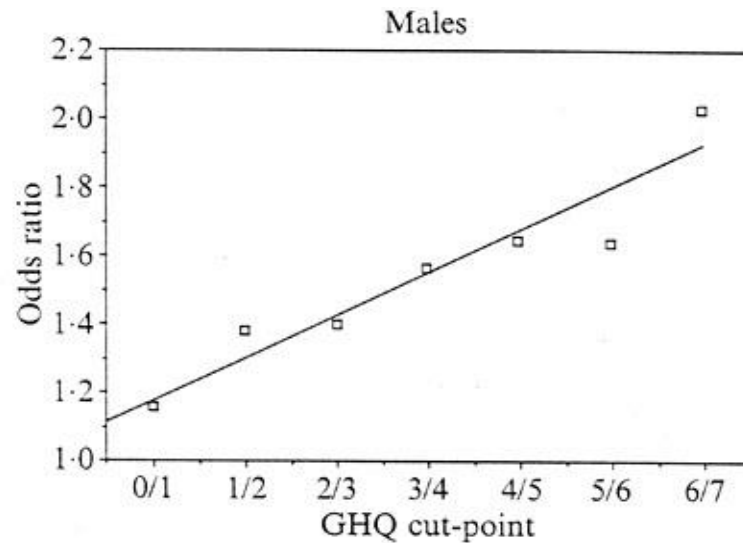
Studies using techniques to induce different moods have shown that compared to neutral or negative mood, people in a positive mood:

- have a broader focus of attention
- generate more ideas
- are more resilient in stressful situations

Positive emotions, health and survival

Seven-year survival is related to baseline mental health

Huppert & Whittington, Psychological Medicine, 1995



Sample of positive and negative items from the GHQ-30

Goldberg, 1972

Negative Items

- ...lost much sleep over worry
- ...felt constantly under strain
- ...finding life a struggle all the time
- ...been feeling unhappy and depressed
- ...been losing confidence in yourself
- ...felt that life is entirely hopeless

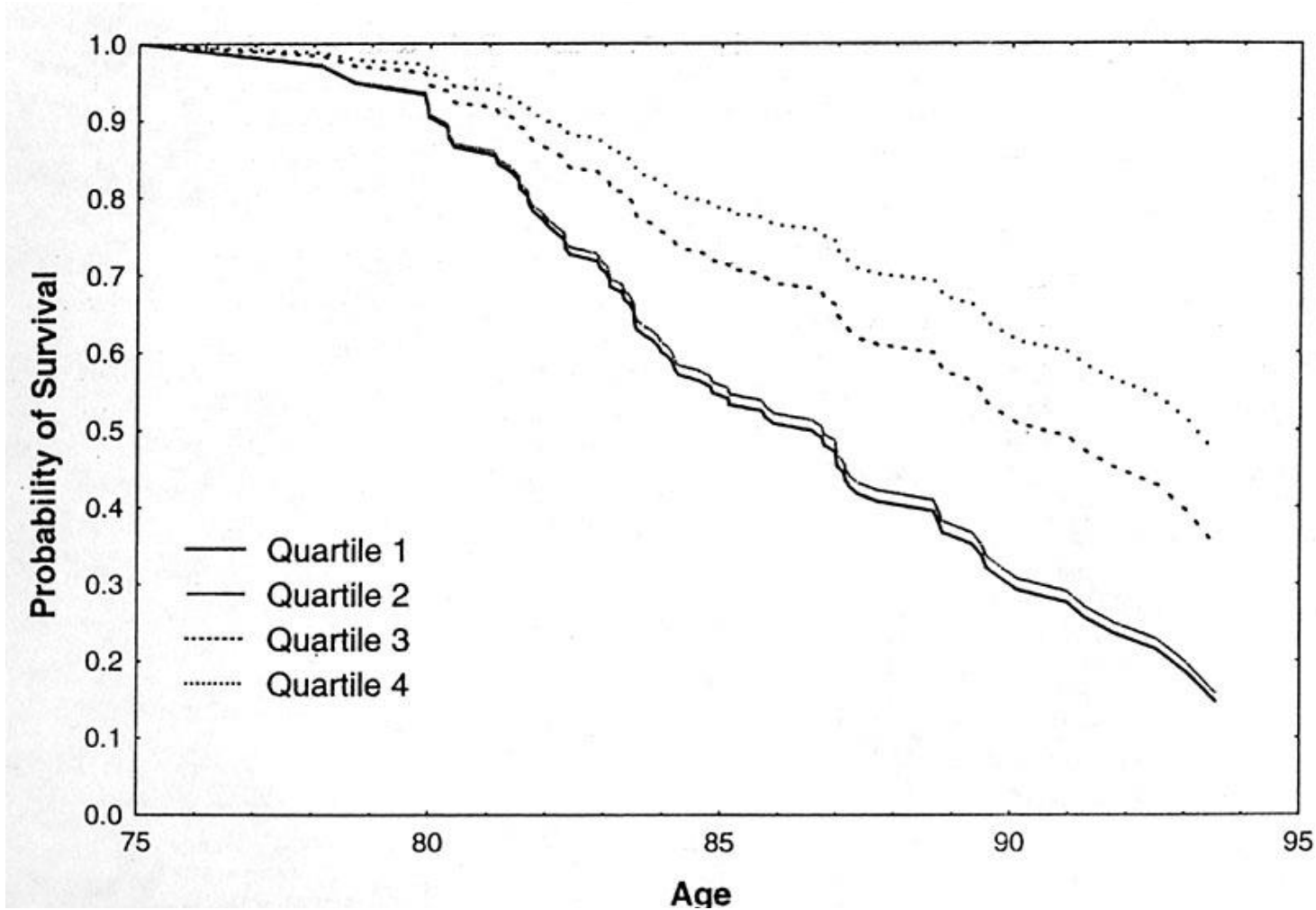
Positive Items

- ...managing to keep yourself busy and occupied
- ...able to feel warmth and affection for those near to you
- ...felt you are playing a useful part in things
- ...able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities
- ...able to face up to your problems
- ...feeling reasonably happy all things considered



Positive emotions in early life

Danner et al, J Pers Soc Psych, 2001

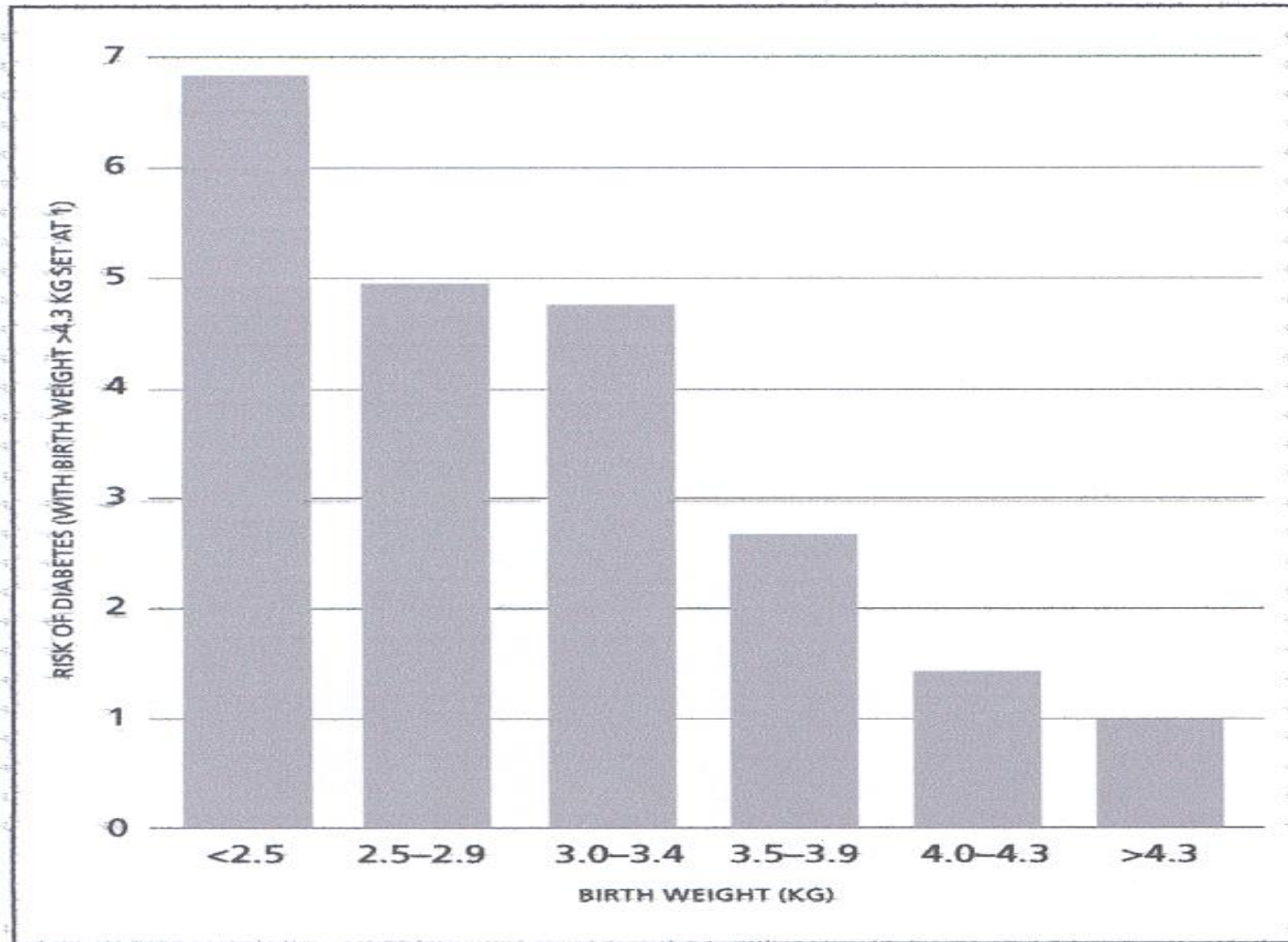


Quartile rankings of the number of positive emotion sentences in autobiographies written in early life and the probability of survival in later life for 180 participants in the Nun Study

A life course perspective

Risk of diabetes in men by birth weight

Adjusted for Body Mass Index



Source: Barker DJP. Mothers, babies and disease in later life. 2nd ed. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone, 1998

Key questions

- What makes people happy?
- What makes happy people?

What makes us happy?

Good marriage

Good friends

Rewarding work

Sufficient money

Physical activity

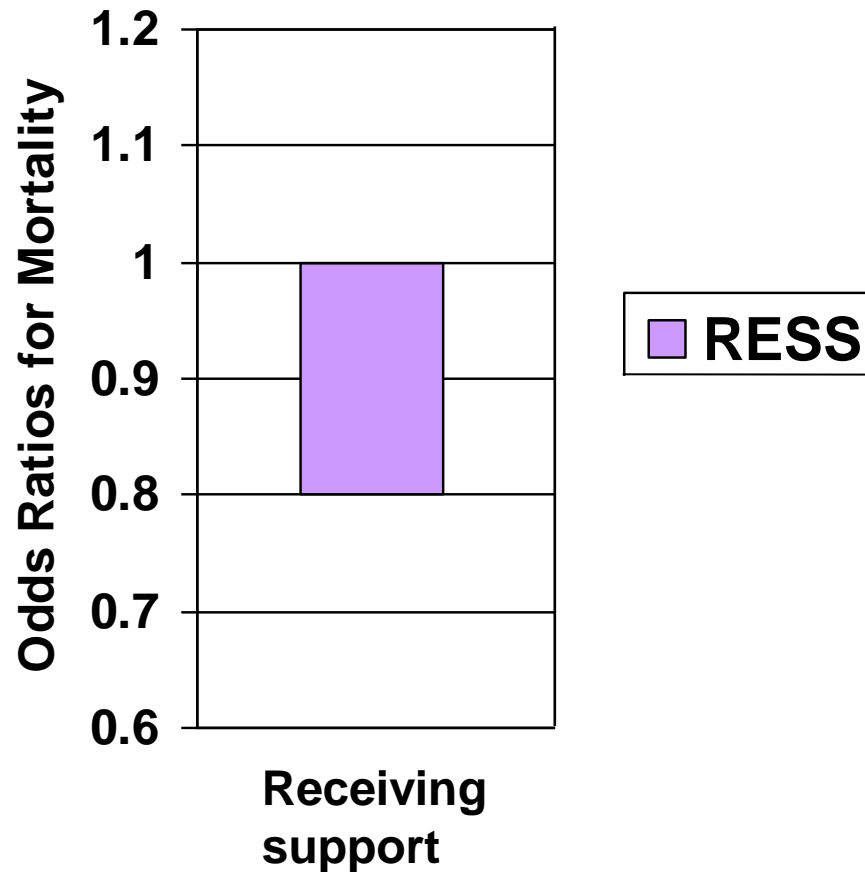
Sound sleep

Good diet

Engaging leisure

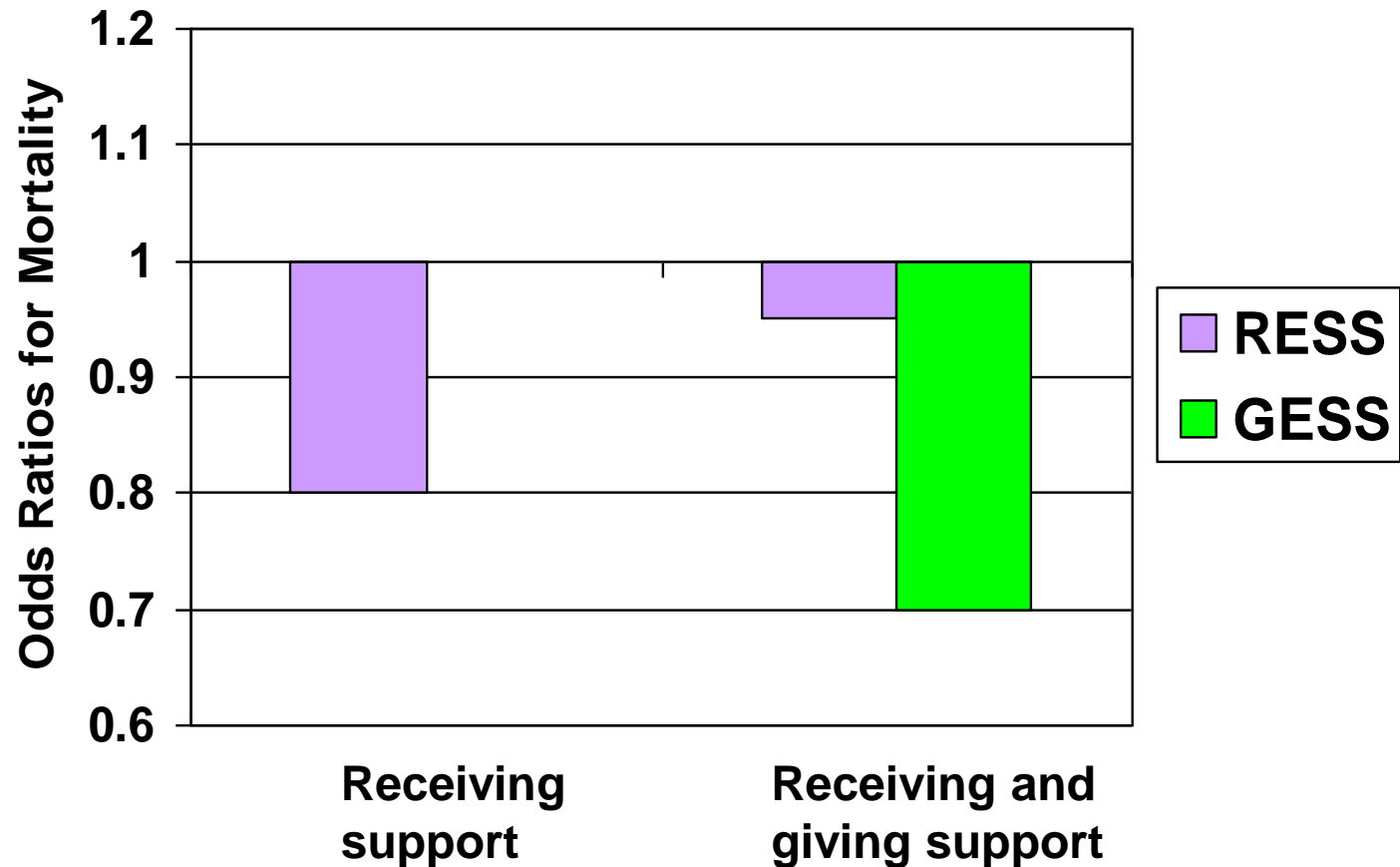
Religious or spiritual practice

Receiving support is beneficial for survival



Results of hierarchical logistic regression (Brown et al. Psychol Science, 2003)
CLOC Study, 423 couples, 5 year follow-up

Giving support is more beneficial than receiving it



Results of hierarchical logistic regression (Brown et al. Psychol Science, 2003)
CLOC Study, 423 couples, 5 year follow-up

What makes happy people?

Role of early development in psychological well-being



Mother-infant attachment and parenting style affect lifelong mental health and cognitive capability

Maternal care programmes brain biology

Rodent studies show high maternal care produces neurochemical effects which:

- increase resilience to stress
- reduce the likelihood of addiction
- enhance learning and memory
- improve survival of hippocampal neurons

**Interventions to
improve well-being
at different stages
in the life course**

**Do social attitudes affect
our well-being?**





HAZARD!
Old People
Feeling Young!

What is the effect of age stereotypes?

Becca Levy and colleagues at Yale University have conducted a series of experiments comparing the effects of positive and negative age stereotypes on:

- Memory
- Numerical ability
- Self confidence
- Cardiovascular response to stress

Negative age stereotypes

Sample of words used for subliminal priming:

- confused
- dying
- dependent
- senile

Positive age stereotypes

Sample of words used for subliminal priming:

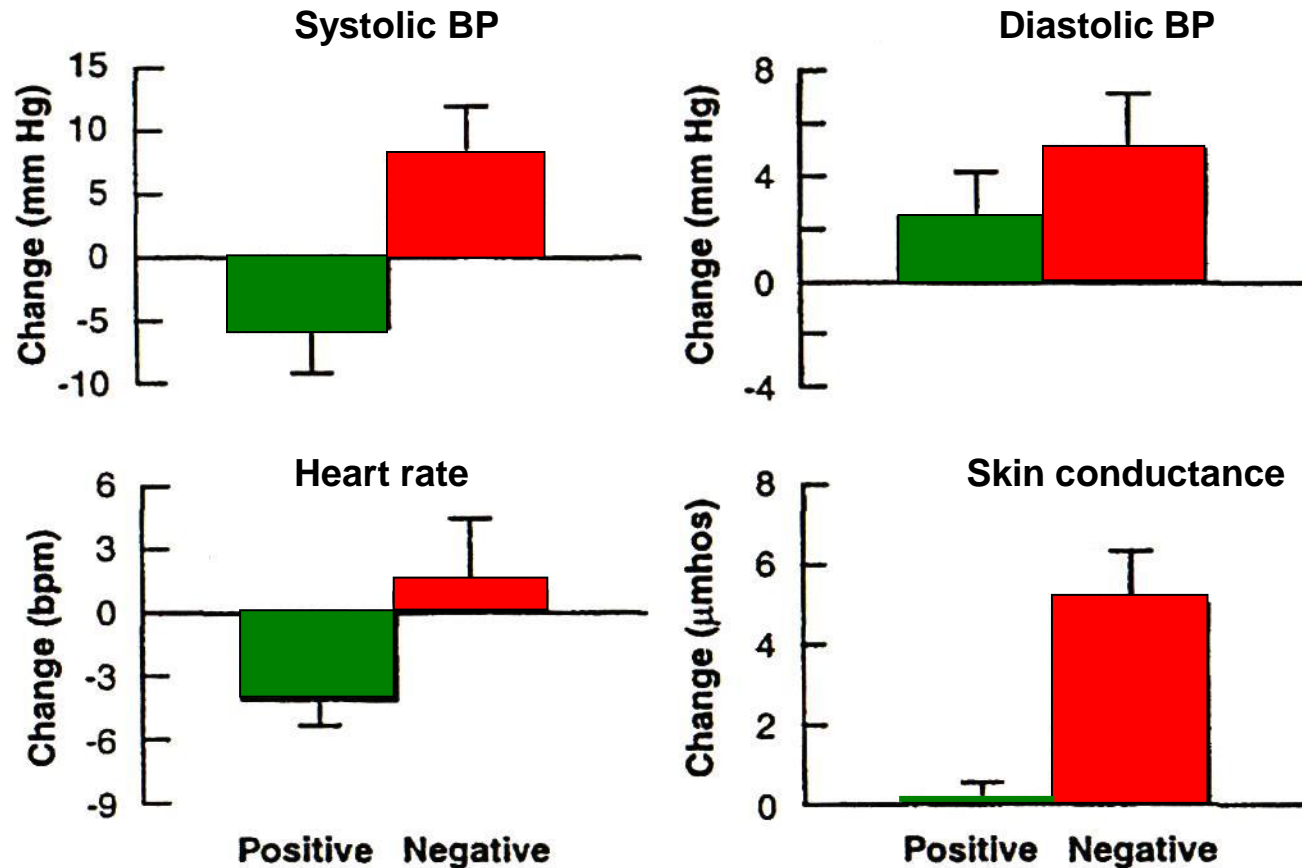
- wise
- astute
- enlightened
- sage

Age stereotypes have a powerful effect on the behaviour and health of older people

- Negative stereotypes impaired capability, confidence and recovery from stress
- Positive stereotypes had beneficial effects
- Age stereotypes can produce a downward spiral or increase functioning and well-being

Influence of ageing stereotypes on cardiovascular response to stress

From Levy et al, J.Gerontology, 2000



Change from baseline

Summary

- **Psychological well-being plays a key role in the ageing process**
- **Well-being can be improved by:**
 - **our own actions**
 - **improved design**
 - **social attitudes**
- **There is a need for a life-course perspective – interventions can be effective at any life stage, but the greatest benefits occur in the early years**

Ageing with serenity

- **Accepting the things that cannot be changed**

Ageing with serenity

- **Accepting the things that cannot be changed**
- **Changing the things that need to be changed**

Ageing with serenity

- **Accepting the things that cannot be changed**
- **Changing the things that need to be changed**
- **Becoming the change you wish to see in the world**