

SPARK CHALLENGE

BETTER BALANCE EDITION

WEEK 1

Poise

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We Are Playing Life's Most Dangerous Game

Is the Spark Challenge life's most dangerous game?

No.

Is aging life's most dangerous game?

Yes.

Playing the aging game with greater poise is a winning move.

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Poiseless Perils

A lack of poise can make it harder to project confidence and competence. It can also create stress and anxiety, which can impact the physical and emotional health of seniors. Additionally, a lack of poise can lead to impulsive decision-making and poor communication skills. Movements that lack poise can place us at greater risk of injury.

A lack of poise can also lead to:

- Letting your emotions get the best of you.
- Difficulty finding, making and keeping friends.
- Loss of confidence and independence
- Poor posture and balance.
- Unsteady gait and movements that increase the risk of falling.

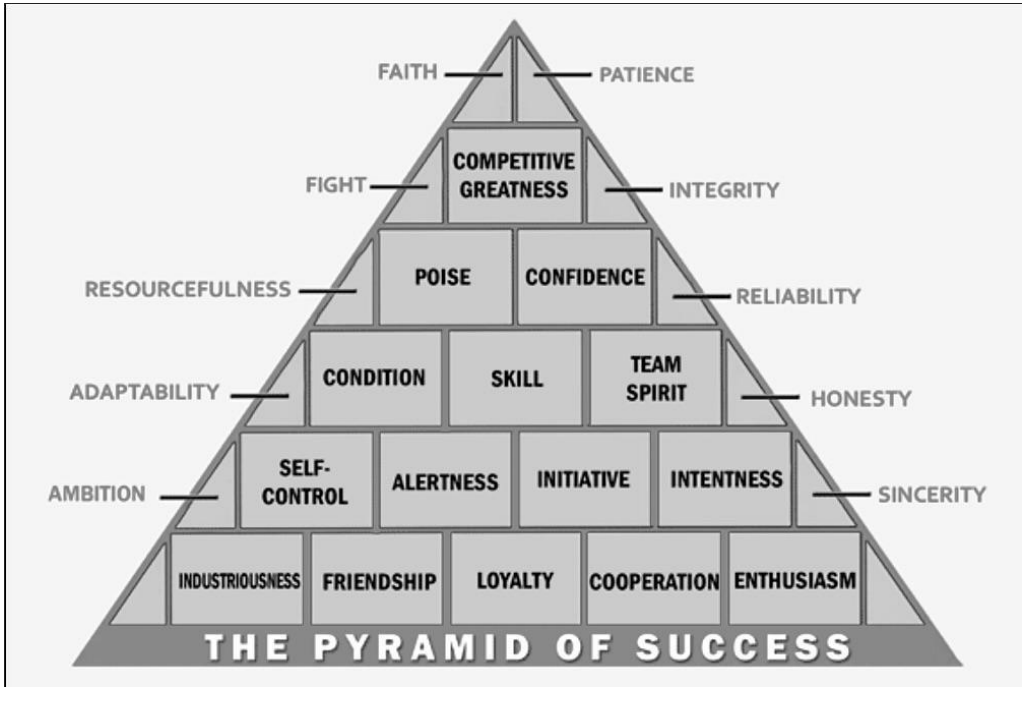


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Poise and the Pyramid of Success

"Poise and confidence are not possible unless you have prepared correctly. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Poise and confidence are a natural result of proper preparation."

— John Wooden

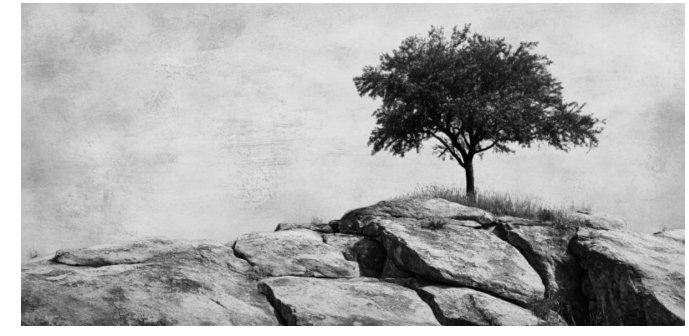


John Wooden, nicknamed "the Wizard of Westwood:"

- Won ten National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) national championships in a 12-year period as head coach for the UCLA Bruins.
- His teams won an NCAA men's basketball record 88 consecutive games.
- Wooden also won the prestigious Henry Iba Award as national coach of the year a record seven times.

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Poise Positives



Poise is the ability to maintain a calm and composed demeanor, even in the face of difficult situations or challenges. It involves being in control of one's emotions and actions, and projecting a sense of confidence and self-assurance. Poise is often associated with grace and elegance, but it is much more than that. It is about being able to handle any situation with confidence and ease, without becoming overwhelmed or flustered.

Becoming more poised means you will be better able to: Handle difficult situations with confidence and grace. It can prepare you to:

- Sit, stand and move with more confidence and grace.
- Build greater trust and rapport with others.
- Live life on your own terms.

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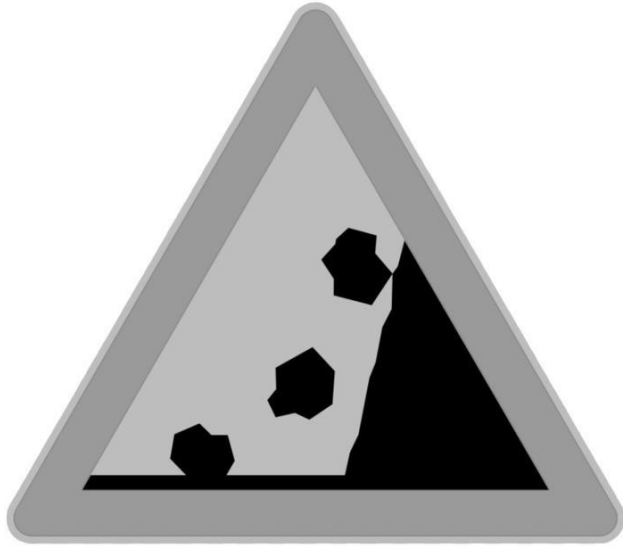
Poise Positives

Pursuing Greater Poise can also lead to:

- **Psychological Resilience** is the mental capacity to deal with or adapt to uncertainty, difficulties, and adversity.
- **Emotional Resilience** refers to how we manage our emotional response to challenges. It also allows us to accept the reality of our situation while retaining the ability to persist.
- **Physical Resilience** enables us to adapt to physical challenges, maintain the stamina and strength necessary to recover and heal in a prompt and effective manner.
- **Community Resilience** refers to the capacity of a group of people to adapt to and bounce back from adversity, whether that be a natural disaster, an act of violence, or economic hardship or a tough loss in the Spark Performance League.

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A Rock in the Road



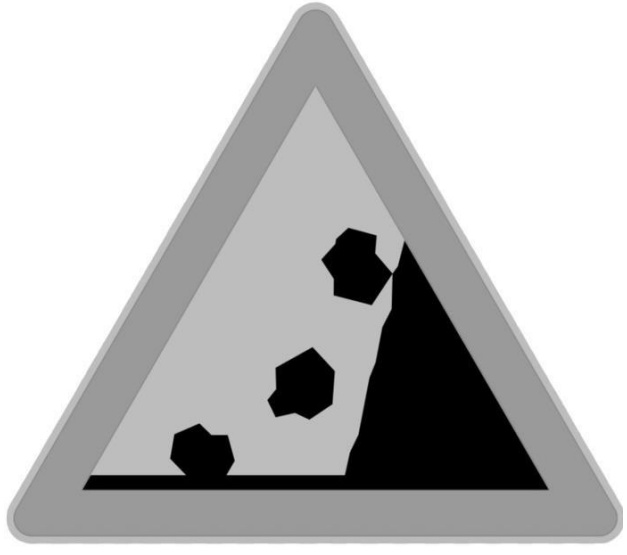
In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. He then hid himself and watched to see if anyone would move the boulder out of the way. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it.

Many people loudly blamed the King for not keeping the roads clear, but none of them did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

A peasant then came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to push the stone out of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded.

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A Rock in the Road



After the peasant went back to pick up his vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been.

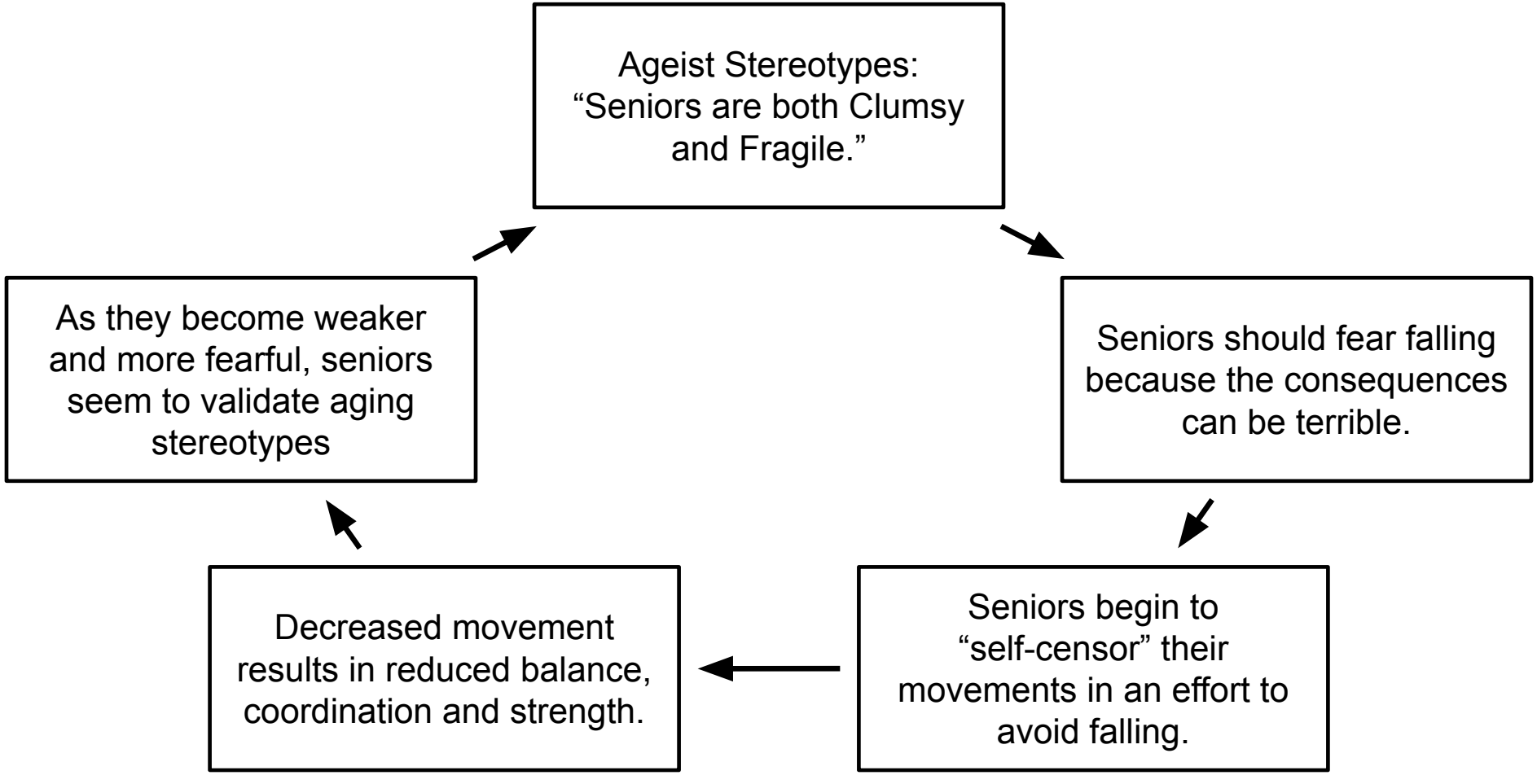
The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the King explaining that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

“We are the people who are willing to push a boulder out of the way so that others can move freely. When we make an effort to increase our own poise, we also do good for others. By a very happy coincidence, when we do good things for others we often find unexpected rewards for ourselves.”

The very first “good thing” we can do for others is to understand the “Doom Cycle” and its impact on seniors.

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The Doom Cycle



This "Doom Cycle" robs seniors of poise and the joy of living.

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Ageist Stereotypes Hurt People

We know well that aging can take things we cherish from us. What we too often fail to appreciate is that aging can also grant us new opportunities for growth and development. The first step toward gaining access to those benefits requires us to overcome our own ageist attitudes. This can be challenging because ageism is:

- The most socially acceptable form of prejudice.
- The most deeply entrenched of all the social biases studied so far.

Ageist stereotypes do great harm to seniors but have also been shown to have serious long-term negative consequences for the younger people who harbor them. Studies have shown that holding negative stereotypes and attitudes toward older adults when we are young is associated with an old age with substantially higher rates of

- Heart disease
- Memory impairment
- Hearing loss
- Hospitalization (50% higher)

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Ageist Stereotypes Hurt People

Instead of seeing what is directly in front of our noses, stereotypes urge us to see what we think we are supposed to see.

When we overcome the hold that stereotypes have on us we begin to see that:

- People of all ages can be clumsy.
- People of all ages can be frail.
- People of all ages can work to improve their poise.

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The Foundations of Poise

“Poise refers to a state of graceful composure, balance, and self-assurance. It is both physical and mental, reflecting an individual's ability to maintain composure and dignity in their demeanor, movements, and interactions.”



Poise is derived from the unification of six fundamental attributes:

Element of Poise	Physical	Mental
Posture	How we sit, stand and move.	How we see the world.
Balance	Being steady on our feet.	Emotional Regulation
Power	Strength and Stamina	Diligence and Fortitude

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Physical Poise

- Physical Poise is a combination of effort and ease.
- It is available to us at every age and condition.



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Mental Poise





Emotional Regulation is Essential to Poise.

Research shows that our ability to maintain control over our emotions is lowest when we are very young and highest when we are very old.

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The Pursuit of Poise

The two types of poise work together to create a sense of ease that leaves a lasting impression on others:

- Physical Poise is reflected in one's:
  - Posture,
  - Body language, and
  - Movements.
- Mental Poise is reflected in one's
  - Calm and composed demeanor
  - Mindfulness, and
  - Graceful response to challenging circumstances

"Poise consists of a set of simple skills all of which can be improved through practice."



Audrey Hepburn

A Side Effect of Shrapnel



Audrey Hepburn in 1942.

Audrey Hepburn's son recalled, she "always held her head and neck in a certain way – not just in her movies but even on long car journeys. She never told me why – and, like most people, I assumed it was because she'd been trained as a dancer." His mother was actually dealing with chronic neck pain as the result of a blast that almost killed her as a teenage volunteer in the wartime Resistance.

Towards the end of the war, she'd ventured out into the garden of her home near Arnhem in the Netherlands, desperate to soak up some sun. She was pale as a ghost from malnutrition and months trapped indoors.

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A Side Effect of Shrapnel



Audrey Hepburn in 1942.

She'd almost dropped off to sleep when a shell landed nearby. Gravel peppered her skin like buckshot and fragments of metal whizzed past.

What she never told anyone until a few years before her death was that a small piece of shrapnel embedded itself in her neck. ‘It left me so I can't bend my neck in the ways other people can,’ she confided to a friend. She told her son, “Promise not to tell anyone as long as I'm alive!”

We all have injuries, pains and limitations but they can’t prevent us from developing better posture – unless we let them.

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Posture and Poise

Posture is a fundamental element in conveying poise and elegance.

Your physical posture influences how:

- Others see you
- You feel about yourself
- Confident you can be in your mobility



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Graceful Movements Graceful Gestures



"We see that every external motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by internal feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind."

— Helena Blavatsky

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Graceful Movements Graceful Gestures

1. Fluid and Controlled Movements:

- Practice moving with smoothness and grace, avoiding sudden or jerky motions.
- This applies to activities such as walking, turning, reaching for objects, or engaging in any physical action.
- Focus on the coordination of your limbs and maintaining a sense of poise and elegance.

2. Sitting and Rising with Grace:

- Practice smooth transitions when sitting down and rising from a chair.
- Approach the chair with poise, maintaining an upright posture.
- Lower yourself gently and gracefully, using controlled movements.
- When rising, push up gradually, using your leg muscles and maintaining an elegant posture.

3. Handshakes and Gestures:

- When extending your hand for a handshake coordinate your movements with the other person, making the interaction seamless and harmonious.
- When making gestures, do so purposefully, ensuring they complement your words and convey your message effectively.

Developing a Poised Mind

“There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy.” — Ralph H. Blum

Self-Awareness:

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, strengths, and challenges. It involves introspection and the capacity to evaluate oneself as an individual separate from the environment and others.

Empathy:

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, allowing one to connect with their emotions on a profound level. It involves both cognitive aspects, like understanding another's perspective, and emotional aspects, such as resonating with their feelings.

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Poised Communication

Graceful Verbal Communication

Involves speaking with kindness, clarity, and respect, emphasizing active listening and empathy to foster understanding and connection. It is essential for building positive relationships and effective interactions in both personal and professional settings.

Graceful Non-Verbal Communication

Conveys messages and emotions using body language, facial expressions, and gestures. It enhances social interactions by fostering kind feelings and helps to build rapport and understanding between individuals.

We Can Learn to Be More Poised

Becoming More Poised is a Process that relies on:

- A Willingness to overcome:
  - Old habits
  - Outdated information
  - Ageist stereotypes
- The Persistence you need to carry you through periods of disillusionment
- Gratitude for what you have and for the people around you.

Putting Poise into Practice

- Movement is part of life – even plants have been shown to move.
- Mobility is essential to independence – when we can choose where we want to go and when we want to be there we call that “freedom of movement.”

