

# *Engaged as We Age*

Tapping Later Life Potential:  
The Power of Engagement  
Jacquelyn B. James, Ph.D.

10/12/17

ESC 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



THE SLOAN CENTER ON  
**aging & work**

<http://www.bc.edu/agingandwork> ■ [agework@bc.edu](mailto:agework@bc.edu)

# What's Ahead?

- Context of aging today
- Is the old context hanging around?
- What is the new paradigm?
- How we might embed new ways of thinking in our culture.



## New Context of Aging

- The U.S. is aging - people are living longer than ever before.
- Older adults are healthier than ever before.
- The economy has affected plans of the “retirement-eligible.”
- What should we do with the added years of life?



# Entering New Territory

“All of us are now in uncharted territory, a stage of life not seen before in human history. And whether woman or man, whether working-class or professional, we are all wondering how we’ll live, what we’ll do, who we’ll be for the next twenty or thirty years.”

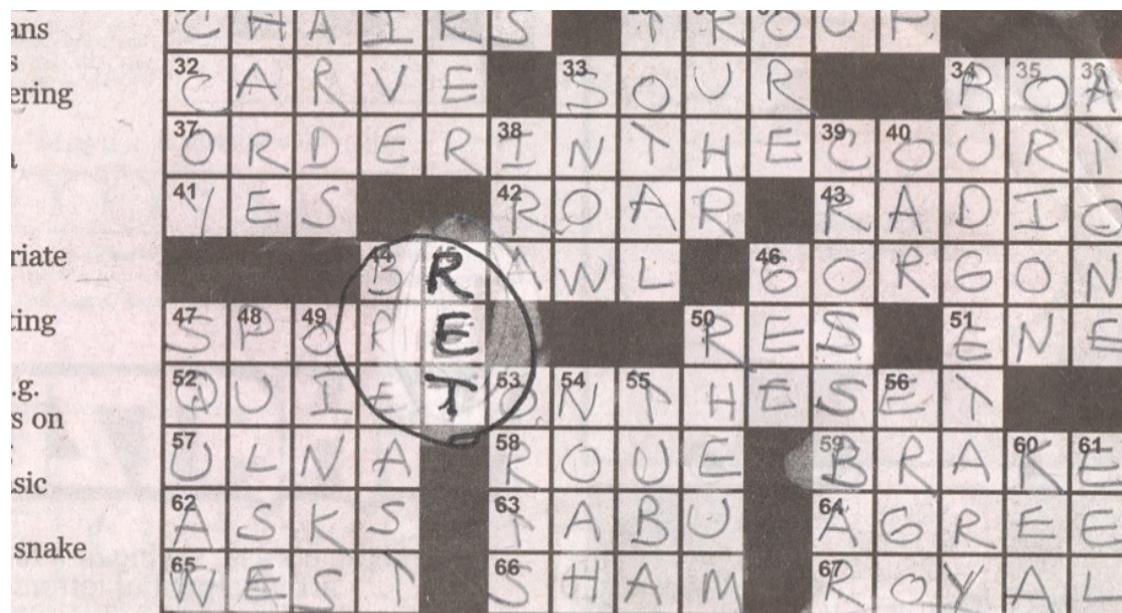
Lillian Rubin, *Sixty on Up: The Truth about Aging in America*, p. 54



# Is the Old Context Still with us?

- ➔ Aging as synonymous with decline, frailty
- ➔ Old as “dependent,” burden of society
- ➔ Paradigm of Disengagement

# Later Life as “Rolelessness”?



- |       |  |  |   |
|-------|--|--|---|
| onse, | 65 Left on the map?                      | 13 Seed on a bagel                           | 44 Chicken serving                                |
| g     | 66 Hoax                                  | 21 “___ the season<br>to be jolly”           | 45 No longer active<br>(Abbr.)                    |
| fight | 67 ___ flush (highest<br>poker hand)     | 22 Tabloid transport                         | 46 “I hadn’t thought<br>of that”                  |
| a     | <b>DOWN</b>                              | 23 Capt. Kirk’s doctor                       | 47 ___ Valley (1960<br>Winter Olympics<br>locale) |
| e     | 1 Palindromic parent                     | 24 Chicago airport                           | 48 Sign of life?                                  |
| he    | 2 Org. that sets law<br>school standards | 28 “___ been working<br>on the railroad ...” | 49 Pen plights                                    |
|       | 3 Alternatives to pianos                 | 30 Where Essen is                            |   |

# What is Your Retirement Destination?

14 Christmas candy piece	S	L	Y	A	S	A
15 Rolls up, as a flag	15 C	S	S	E	N	C
16 Wily					21 A	I
18 Fruit of the mind						
19 Cores	23 S	24 H	25 A	26 R	P	A
20 Supreme council of old Rome	28 W	I	V	E	S	
21 Get out into the open	33 A	R	I	D		35 B
22 Significant advances	37 B	E	D		38 G	A
23 Quick thinking and then some						
28 "The First ___ Club"				40 S	O	L
29 Greek harp						
30 Hit in a high arc	43 F	44 A	45 R	E	A	S
33 Like a desert	47 A	C	U	I	T	Y
34 Fireplace rod						
36 African antelope						
37 Retirement destination	53 R	I	N	S	E	
38 Like meat past its prime	55 A	N	I	M	E	
39 Designer-to-be's aspiration	56 D	I	N	S		
40 Like Gibraltar?						

**DOWN** 20 F

# Preparing to Retire?

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

PEACE ON END? BY HENRY QUARTERS

### ACROSS

- 1 Gridlock consequence
- 6 Shape carved on a tree, often
- 11 Word with "aside," "down," "out" or "on"
- 14 Where some sports events are held
- 15 Long answer on a test
- 16 Santa \_\_\_ winds
- 17 Business tie?
- 19 Tai \_\_\_
- 20 Place with a keeper
- 21 Cotton gin inventor Whitney
- 22 Family reunion attendees
- 23 Make louder
- 27 Proof of purchase
- 29 Sigma-Upsilon connection
- 30 Breakfast dining area
- 32 Sunrise time
- 33 In many cases, to a poet
- 34 Adhesives
- 36 Word with "pad" or "tender"
- 39 It's one thing after another?
- 41 Vision of sugarplums dancing in one's head, e.g.
- 43 Equine patriarch
- 44 Slate backers
- 46 Parsley serving
- 48 Garment
- 49 Paperless exam
- 51 Record half
- 52 Prefix with "cyclist"
- 53 Lloyd's of London, for one
- 56 Certain excavation hole
- 58 Zero, in rugby
- 59 Ottoman Empire officer
- 60 Figure-skater Midori
- 61 Wrangler competitor
- 62 Preparing for a kiss, say



- 68 Hole in one
- 69 Middle Eastern bigwig (var.)
- 70 Watchmaker's aid
- 71 "Sure," cowboy-style
- 72 Twilled fabric
- 73 \_\_\_ & Young (accounting firm)
- 7 Cousin of -ette
- 8 One of the 12 tribes of Israel
- 9 Complained bitterly
- 10 Hardly surprising
- 11 Preparing to retire, in slang
- 12 Not at all cool
- 13 \_\_\_ furnish, as a reputation
- 18 Wrap around
- 23 Ring-shaped island
- 24 "The Godfather" group
- 25 Rocks while singing a lullaby
- 26 "What's mine is \_\_\_"
- 28 Some ladies of the field
- 31 Remains in good condition
- 35 Hindu dresses
- 37 "Rice-\_\_\_, the San Francisco treat"
- 38 On the up-and-up
- 40 Drive-window link
- 42 Happening in the sky
- 45 Shawls worn in Westerns (var.)
- 47 Non-Jewish
- 50 Lentil or bean
- 53 Marquetry feature
- 54 Salome, to King Herod
- 55 Soapbox-derby entrant
- 57 Big-time giver, say
- 63 Beer blast centerpiece
- 64 Prior, to poets
- 65 Paintballer's need
- 66 Increases, as the ante
- 67 Favorite

# Age-old problem of Ageism

Deeply ingrained, and socially sanctioned prejudice  
against the old—i.e. ageism as the worst “ism”

*Levy & Banaji, 2004*

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>

Age

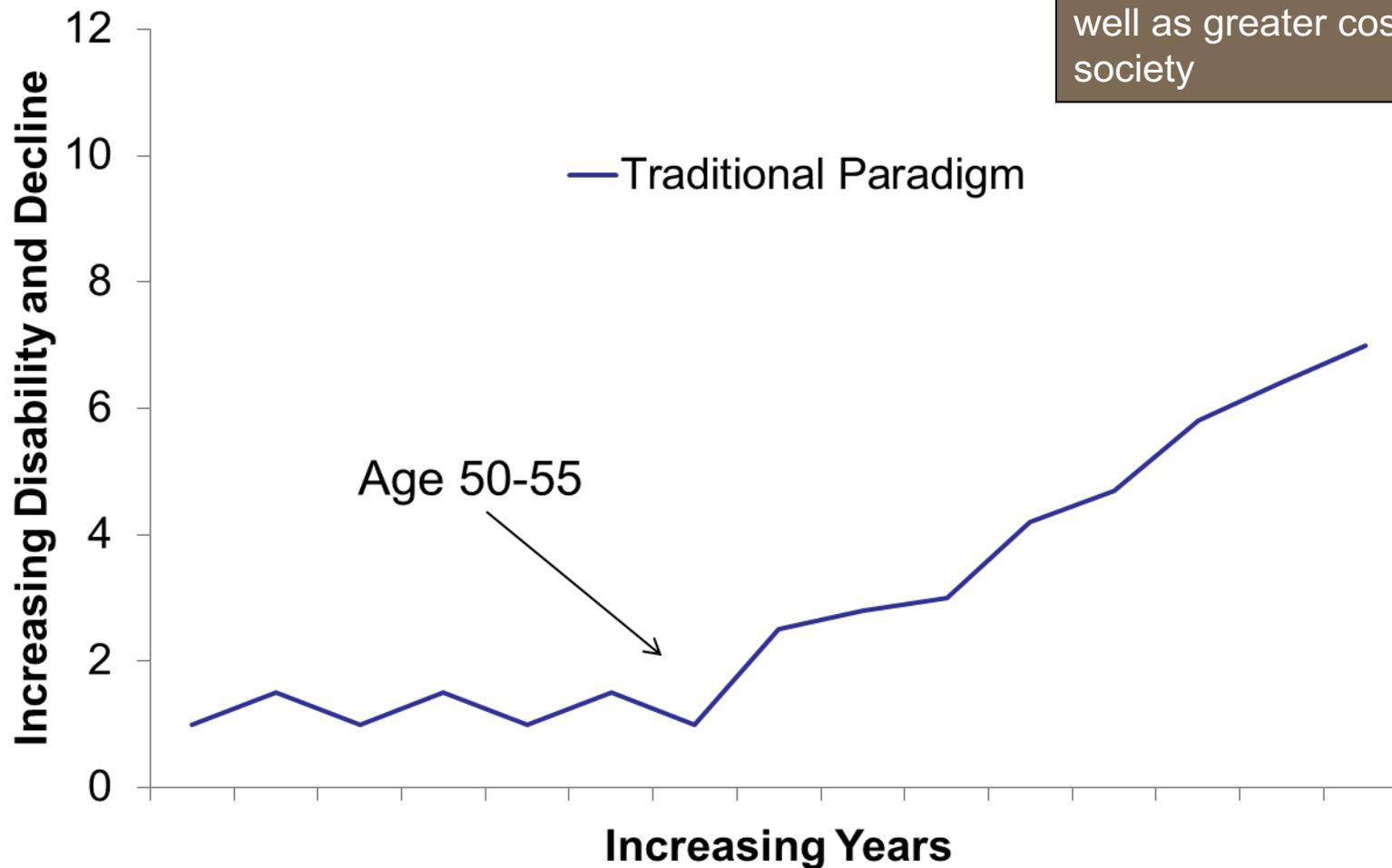
Gender

Sexual orientation

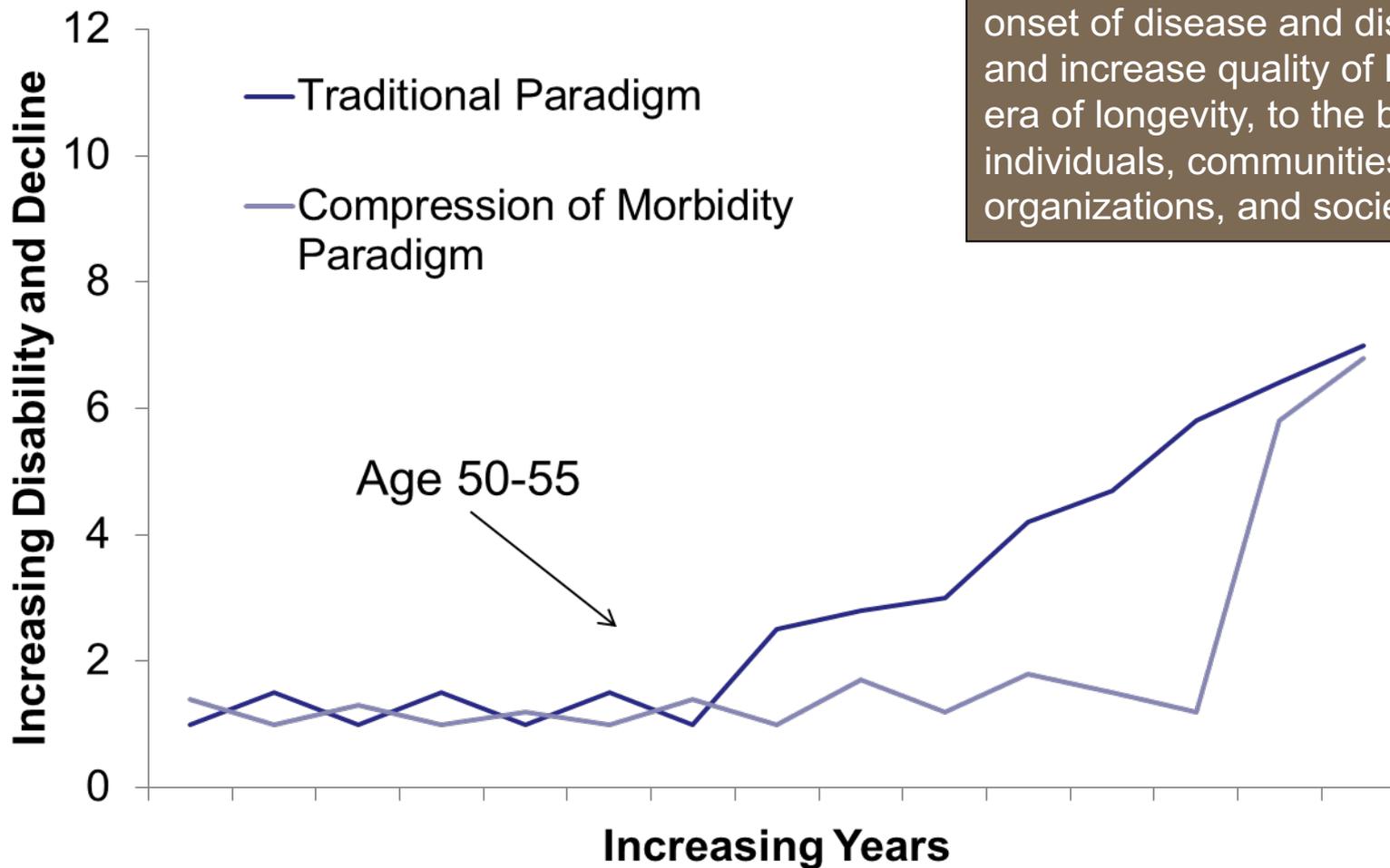
Race

# Paradigm shift needed?

**Increased longevity =** additional years of chronic disease, disability, and reduced quality of life, as well as greater costs to society



# Paradigm shift needed?



New, more positive—and arguably more actionable—paradigms: Lifestyle improvements can delay the onset of disease and disability and increase quality of life in this era of longevity, to the benefit of individuals, communities, organizations, and society.

## What if...?

...we saw aging as an opportunity rather than a problem?

...we recognized and celebrated the powerful source of talent, skills, experience and wisdom represented by those in middle and later life?

...we embraced the unique opportunity presented by increased longevity to tackle some of society's most urgent challenges?



# One Example: Boston College Exemplar Study of Encore.org Fellows

## ***Doing Good by Doing Well: Encore Fellows Build Nonprofits' Capacity to Serve Children and Youth***

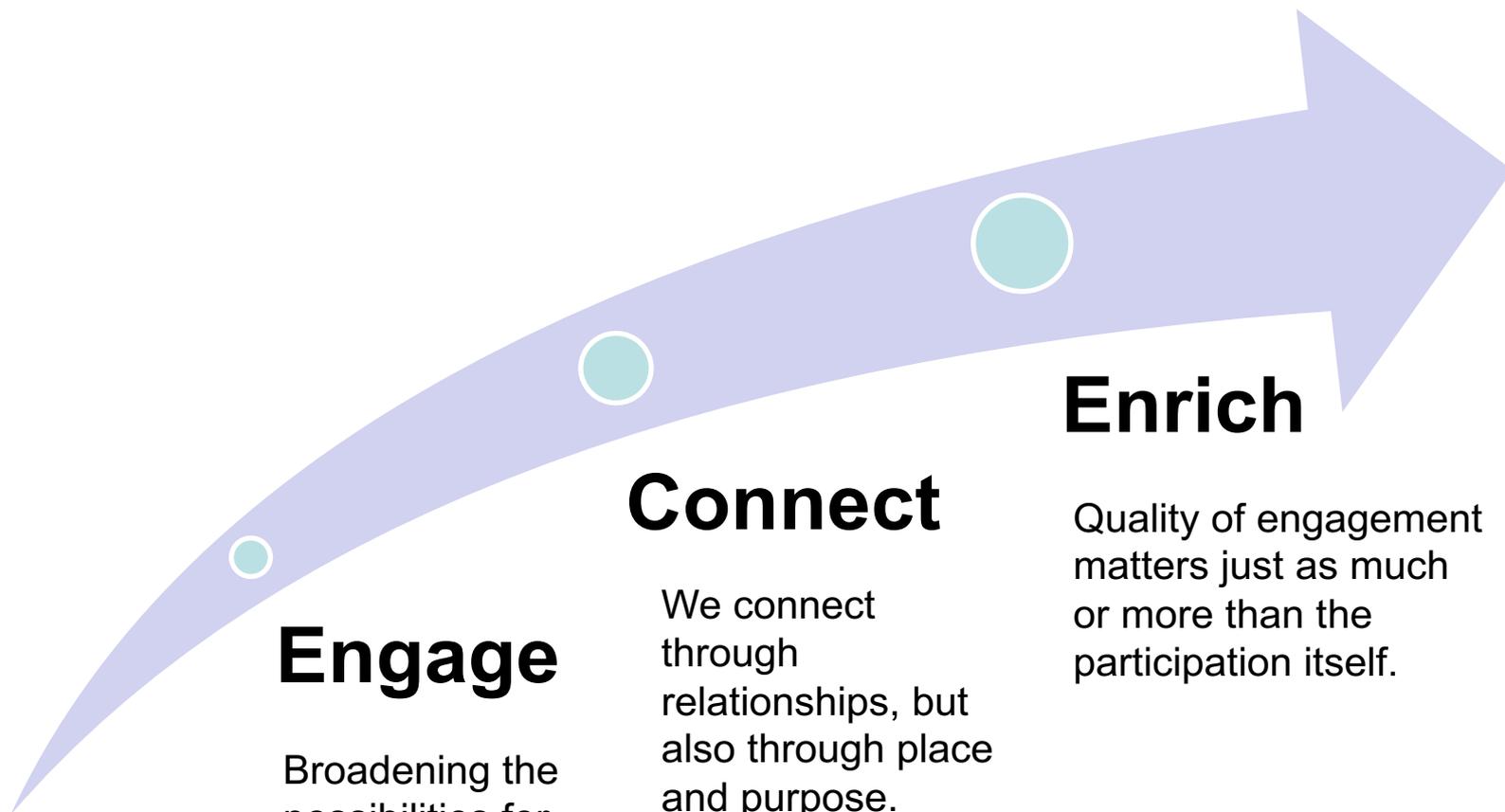
- Nomination process to identify “highly successful fellows and common factors in this level of success
- Featured are:
  - Cheryl Edmonds, Metropolitan Family Service, Portland, OR
  - Blake Sacha, Science Foundation Arizona, Phoenix, AZ
  - Donna Garban, Green City Force, New York, New York

# Observations

- Made good matches
- Integrated fellows into the fabric and culture of their organizations
- Listened and learned together, in on-boarding processes that generally spanned 90 days.
- Both sides open to new ideas
- Fellows were given a high degree of independence
- Fellows were seen as highly professional, impactful and constructive.

# What was said about the Fellows

- Motivation and Purpose
- Initiative
- Solid, thorough and reliable
- Project manager par excellence
- People skills
- Life stage—important factor in success



## **Engage**

Broadening the possibilities for accomplishment and contribution in later life is critical.

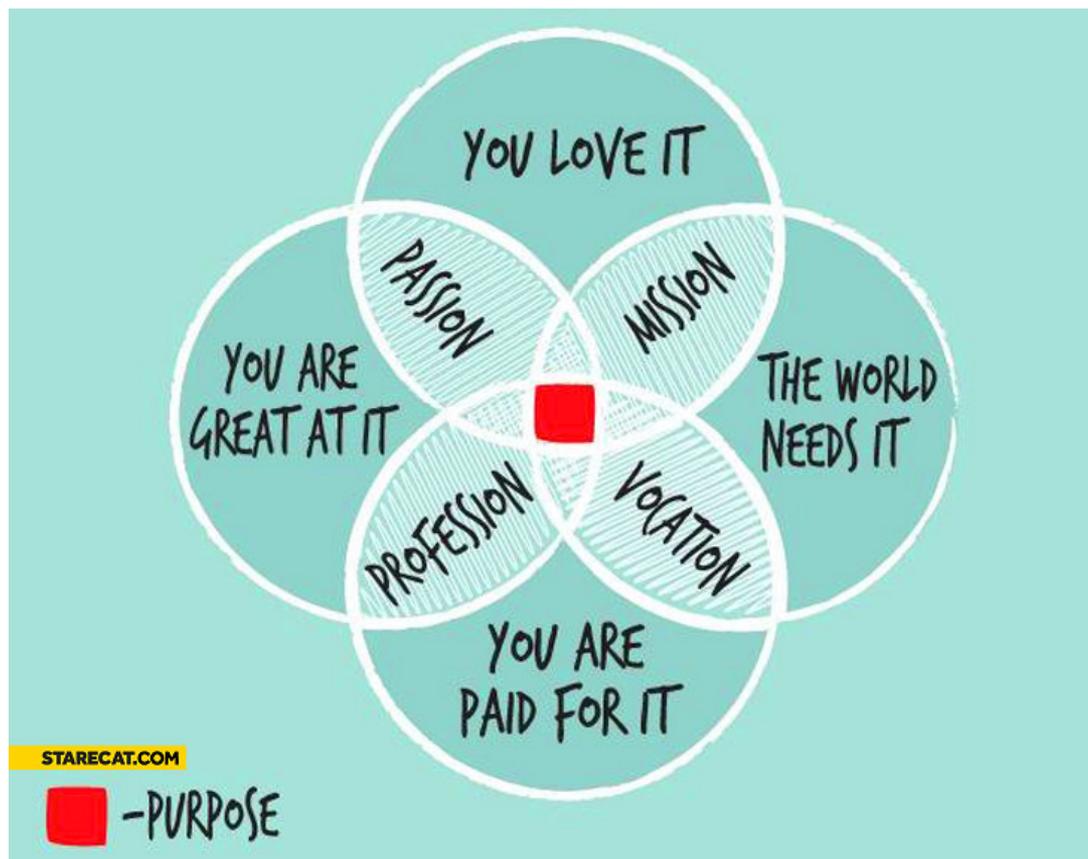
## **Connect**

We connect through relationships, but also through place and purpose.

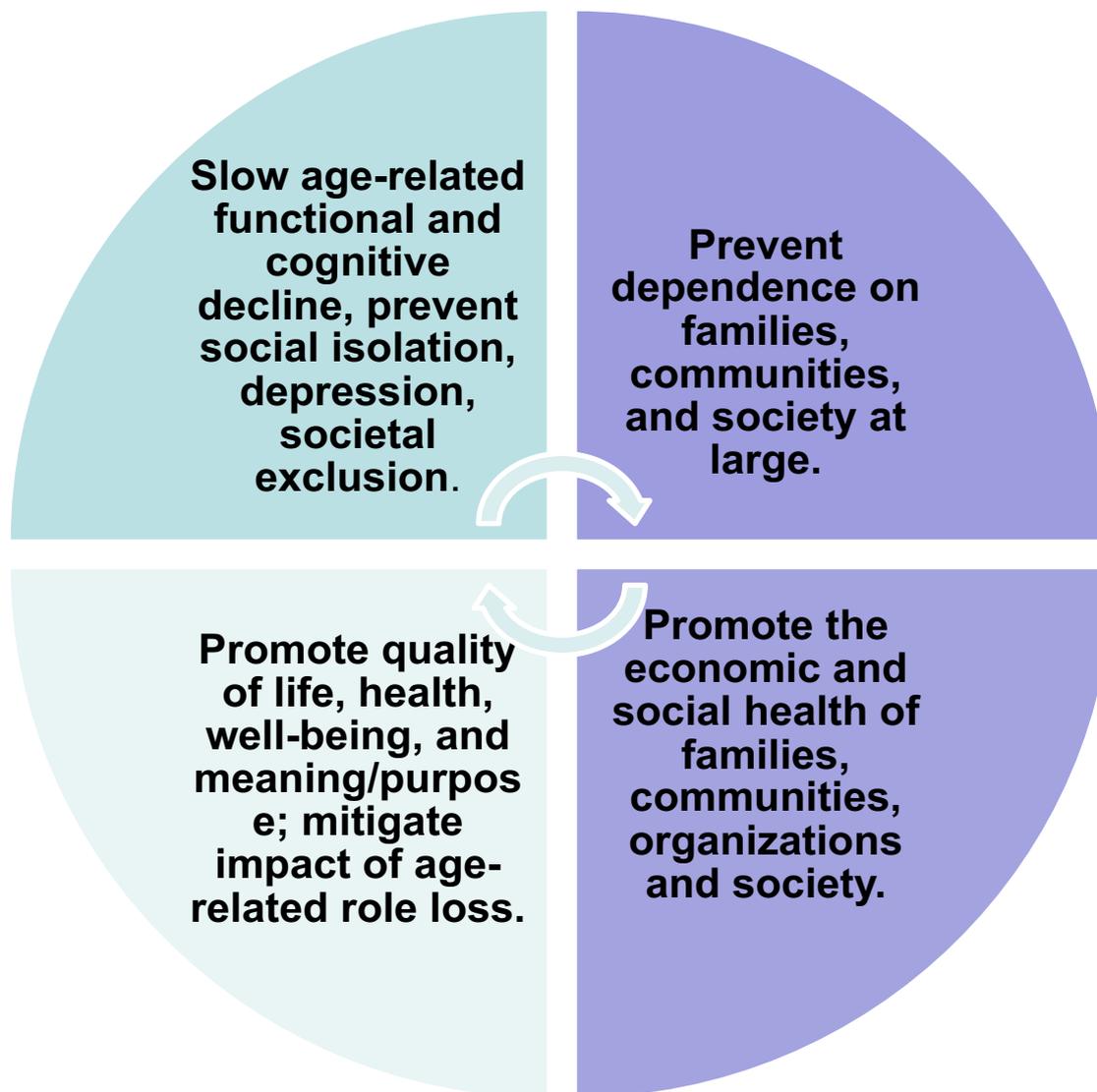
## **Enrich**

Quality of engagement matters just as much or more than the participation itself.

# When People Find the Sweet Spot...



# The Impact Can Be Profound



“None are so old as those  
who have outlived  
enthusiasm.”

*Henry David Thoreau*



Thank you!  
[jamesjc@bc.edu](mailto:jamesjc@bc.edu)