

## Optimal Health and Older Adults: The Existential Health Dimension as a Health-Promoting Potential

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**Abstract :** With a considerable increase in the aging population in the Nordic countries there is a call for a deeper understanding of healthy aging and its underlying mechanisms. The aim of this study is to uncover health and well-being for older adults according to their own views and understand what role the existential dimension play? The study uses a hermeneutical approach. Material was collected through focus group interviews with 18 older adults. The texts were interpreted through hermeneutical reading. The underlying mechanisms of health among older adults are described, illustrating the key prerequisites for health as being in the present. This implies 'living on the continuums of life and death' and in this field of forces also 'living on the continuum of the past and the future'. Important aspects for being in the present was balancing ambivalent emotions, considering existential issues, and being in connectedness. Health for older adults may be understood in the light of the metaphor of taking it one day at a time. Being in the present was emphasized as a health potential for older adults highlighting the existential health dimension. From a societal point of view, this implies that health promotion should focus on highlighting the importance of the existential dimension of health since it holds health-promoting potentials for older adults. Optimal health for older adults requires awareness of one's attitude to life through being in the present as a basis for a positive and healthy outlook on life.

**Keywords :** focus group interviews, hermeneutics, life experiences, older adults

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