Why Do Relationships in Later Life Matter? The Links between Relationships and Well-Being

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Newlywed spouses are deeply in love and highly committed.

Yet, this initial happiness often fails to translate into marital success.

Why do couples have so much difficulty maintaining their relationship?
Close relationships have a powerful influence on our mental health...
...as well as our physical health.

Cancer studies
- Married individuals are 20% more likely to survive

Marital quality and congestive heart failure
- 30% in high quality marriages died; 55% in low quality marriages died.

Marital quality and immune function
- Wounds healed 40% faster in less hostile marriages
Individuals with good social relationships have a 50% greater likelihood of survival compared to those with poor social relationships (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010).
We live in an aging society......

....and more than ever before older adults are likely to be unmarried

Dept. of Health and Human Services,
Administration on Aging
The headlines:
- “Senator slams spending on “Federal Match.com”
- “Why is the US Studying Seniors’ Dating Habits?”

The study:
- 300 couples age 30-45 or age 60+
- Must be married for 10+ years or dating less than 8 months

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