

Living Well: A Life Course Approach to Health and Wellbeing

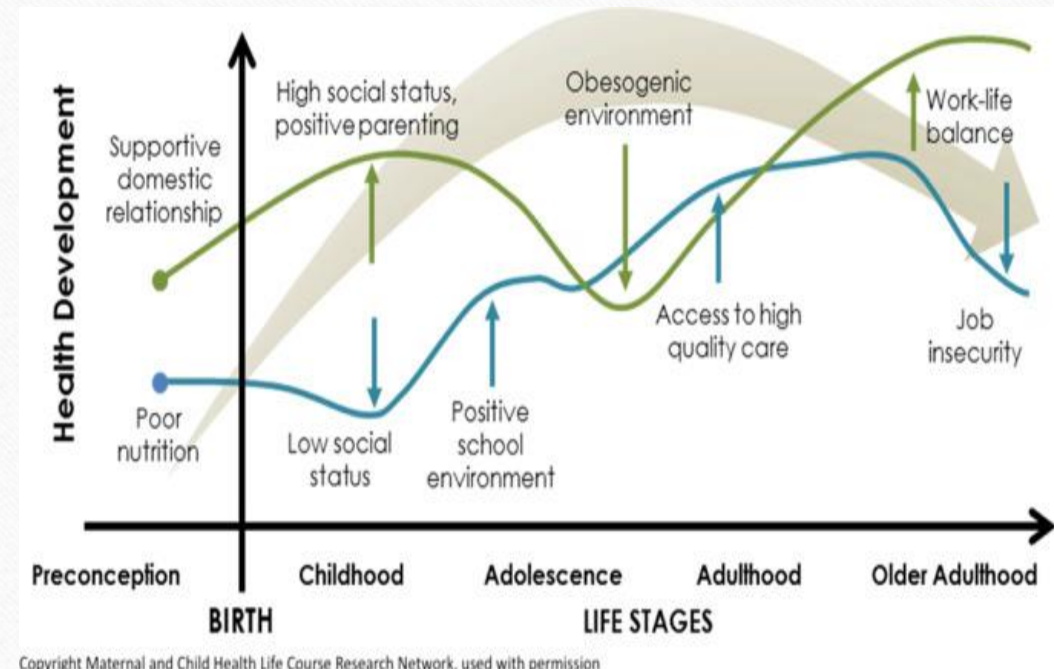
Navigating Transitions, Determinants, and Interventions

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Defining the Life Course Approach

- **Core Concept:** Health is a cumulative result of biological, psychological, and social experiences (Pranee Liamputtong, 2025).
- **Key Principles (Elder, 1998):**
 - **Lifelong Development:** No life stage can be understood in isolation.
 - **Timing:** The impact of an event depends on *when* it occurs.
 - **Linked Lives:** Health is interdependent with family and social networks.
 - **Agency:** Individuals make choices within the constraints of their environment.



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(Arons, Schickedanz and Halfon, 2021)

The Foundations: Early Life & Biological Programming

- **The Barker Hypothesis:** The "Developmental Origins of Health and Disease" (DOHaD).
- **Critical vs. Sensitive Periods:** * **Critical:** Windows where exposure has permanent effects (e.g., organogenesis).
 - **Sensitive:** Periods of heightened responsiveness to stimuli.
- **Epigenetics:** How environmental factors can "switch" genes on or off (Li et al., 2023).

Wider Determinants: The Social Gradient

- **The Dahlgren-Whitehead Model:**
 - Individual lifestyle factors (Inner circle).
 - Social and community networks.
 - Living and working conditions (Housing, Education, Healthcare).
 - Socio-economic, cultural, and environmental conditions (Outer layer).
- **Health Inequalities:** The "Social Gradient" in health (Marmot, 2010).

Lifestyle Choices & The Concept of Agency

- **Health Behaviours:** The factors include smoking, diet, alcohol, and physical activity.
- **Bounded Agency:** The socio-economic reality limits the individual decisions (Sikder et al., 2025).
- **Risk Clustering:** Health negative behaviors tend to cluster in the deprived regions.
- **Positive Influences:** High health literacy and strong social capital.

Life Transitions and Trajectories

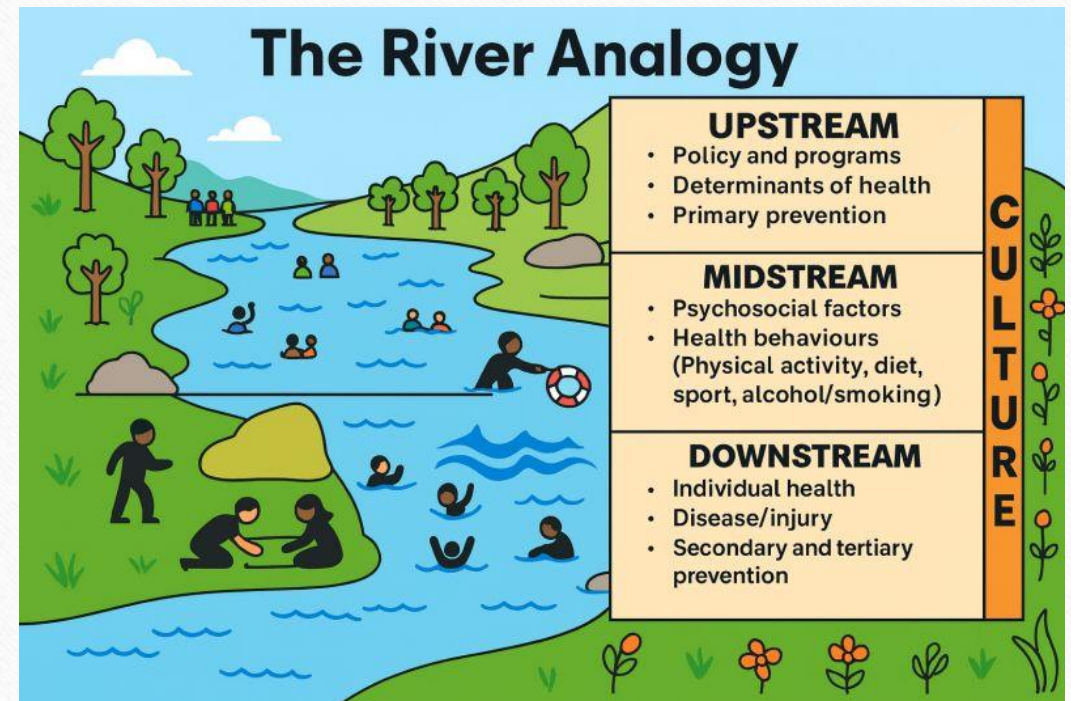
- **Transitions:** Lifetime events (Enrollment in school, joining the workforce, parenthood, retirement).
- **Turning Points:** Changes that lead to a significant change in the health pathway (Diehl and Lindenthal, 2021).
- **Cumulative Advantage/Disadvantage:** The Matthew Effect- the rich grow healthier, the poor sicker with time.

Health in Mid-Life and Aging

- **The "Weathering" Hypothesis:** Premature biological aging caused by chronic exposure to social/economic dislocation (Simons et al., 2020).
- **Morbidity Compression:** The aim of having a long health life and short sick days.
- **Active Aging:** Social participation and functional ability.

Appraising Interventions: Upstream vs. Downstream

- **Upstream Interventions:** Changes on the policy level (Sugar tax, Minimum wage, Housing standards).
- **Downstream Interventions:** Change on an individual level (GP referrals, smoking cessation apps) (Battalio et al., 2022).
- **The Best Approach:** An amalgamation of the two, but devoted to Proportionate Universalism.



(Ross, 2025)

Impact of Early Intervention: A Case Study

- **Example:** The Sure Start program, or First 1000 Days programs.
- **Evidence:** Cognitive development, less obesity, and emotional control (Tonelli and de Siqueira Rotenberg, 2020).
- **Cost-Benefit:** Each £1 of investment in early years is saving much more in the future on health care and social expenditures.

Conclusion & Summary

- **Summary:** Health is a life long process that is dependent on timing, social environment, and cumulative experiences.
- **Final Reflection:** Wellbeing should be enhanced by looking beyond the clinic to the structural determinants at birth.
- **Future Practice:** The professionals should have a comprehensive, evidence-based perception of the past of an individual.

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