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What happens to our emotions in normal aging?
• The “classic” view
  – *Old age is a time of dampened, rigid, and flat emotionality* (Banham, 1951; Jung, 1933; Looft, 1972)

• The “new” view
  – *Old age is a time of emotional vibrancy, refinement, and well-being, when close relationships become increasingly important* (Carstensen, 1995; Labouvie-Vief, 1999)

(Verhaeghen & Salthouse, 1997; Salthouse, 2004)
More “new” than “old”, but complicated

- Reactivity
  - General
  - Sadness
- Regulation
  - Suppression
  - Detachment reappraisal
  - Positive reappraisal

- Empathy
  - Recognizing single emotions in static images
  - Tracking of socially-embedded dynamic emotions
  - Emotional empathy and prosocial behavior
What makes marriages last?

- Direct observation of marital interaction
  - 15-minute unrehearsed conversations
  - Continuous measures of emotion:
    - Physiology
    - Behavior
    - Subjective experience
So what’s the secret recipe?

20 years of marriage

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- Emotions
- Empathy
- Physiological arousal
  - Soothing
- Genes
- Some good breaks
  - Staying healthy
  - Emptying the nest
What happens to our emotions in “abnormal” aging?
Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD)

• Early onset, degenerative, rapid progressing
• Not so rare
• A “smart bomb” honing in on emotion centers in the brain
• Robs patients and loved ones of the very things that age normally preserves

• Research program
  – What changes and what doesn’t?
  – Brain/behavior relationships
  – Caregiver vulnerability and resiliency