

# Firenze 68° National Congress SIGG

## 13 – 16 December 2023

This oral presentation was part of the SYMPOSIUM  
THE DOMAINS OF INTRINSIC ABILITY: INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE.

### **The psychological component: Emotional Vitality**

C. Siviero<sup>1</sup>, R. D'Alfonso<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Physiotherapist, AGAPE AVO (Authorized Validation Organization), Milan

<sup>2</sup> Psychologist, Casa-famiglia San Giuseppe, Vimercate (Milan)

### **Abstract**

The WHO defines Intrinsic Capacity (whose domains are the motor, metabolic, cognitive, sensory and psychological) as the combination of physical and mental characteristics of an individual. Each domain of IC influences and is, in some measure, influenced by the others. This interesting concept values what the person has instead of focusing on their deficits, and it centers around the individual's responsibility for their own well-being. *“If the individual is enabled to understand and follow the trajectories of his/her health status (defined in terms of functions and personal values rather than as complex nosological entities), he/she may take responsibility for its maintenance at optimal levels.”* (1).

This paper will highlight just how much the psychological domain, and more specifically Emotional Vitality, can support the elderly person through their life path and motivate them to take care of themselves. Old and very old individuals are living a wonderful but difficult period of their life, when hard times are unfortunately common; it is the season of great harvest but also of much, too much loss. Maintaining emotional vitality is crucial in this phase to avoid slipping into withdrawal and depression. The validating approach, by legitimizing emotions instead of negating and contrasting them, helps fight desperation, apathy and isolation. The practices of health and social care today are meant to go in this same direction, with a particular focus on *how* to intervene to positively influence the individual's psychological component, without losing sight of the values of normalcy in aging and respect for the person's wishes. The focus is on quality of the relationship: empathic and respectful. This takes weight off and it helps the elderly person to believe in themselves once again, to find strength and Emotional Vitality. Doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and all care workers can achieve more if they genuinely seek emotional contact with their patients and truly listen to them. Social services as well can intervene for the sense of emptiness and lack of meaning, which the elderly often experience, by developing better relationships.

### **References**

1 Cesari M, Araujo de Carvalho I, Amuthavalli Thiyagarajan J, et al. Evidence for the Domains Supporting the Construct of Intrinsic Capacity. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 2018 Nov 10;73(12):1653-1660. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerona/gly011>