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CAROL GREENFIELD, *forum organizer*

Psychologists: Resilience can be key to retirement

Newton forum focuses on the mind-body link

By Rhonda Stewart
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NEWTON — Although some stress and anxiety may seem unavoidable as retirement approaches, psychologists say people have a range of tools they can use to make the transition easier.

"Resiliency is the ability to bounce back. It's looking at things you can actually influence or create," said Ann Webster, a health psychologist with Newton's Mind-Body Medical Institute.

"Another part of resiliency is feeling that you have a sense of control, as opposed to feeling, 'I'm helpless, I'm hopeless, I'm a victim of circumstance.'"

Webster will be one of the keynote speakers at a forum Tuesday at the Newton Free Library called "Resiliency in the Face of Life Changes: The Mind-Body Connection."

People can develop resilience, she said, by paying attention to factors that influence physical well-being, such as diet, exercise, and making time for relaxation. But it's also important to nurture qualities that affect psychological health.

"Another part of resiliency is having a sense of community around you," Webster said. "If you're not working, it could be studying something, doing something creative, developing spirituality, volunteering."

Eva Selhub, the institute's medical director and the forum's other keynote speaker, agreed with Webster that a person's response to stress is determined by his or her resilience. She said the fight-or-flight response can change over time and, as it does, means of coping with it must also change.

"In the aging process, it's harder to adapt. It's physiologically harder to adapt because systems are set in a certain way," she said. "We live in a hyperactive state that doesn't acknowledge — or even admonish — people who relax or take time off."

The forum is the last in a series of talks this season on life options in retirement. Earlier topics include being able to afford to retire and working in retirement. Organizer Carol Greenfield said that approximately 150 people have attended each of the discussions that have been held since January in Newton. While residents from other west-suburban communities such as Wellesley, Watertown, and Waltham have attended, Greenfield said people have come from as far away as Foxborough.

A series of programs have spun

off from the discussions, including small group meetings to talk about issues raised in the forums and workshops in collaboration with Newton Community Education.

The first program in the fall series is scheduled for Oct. 2, when the keynote speaker will be Marc Freedman, author of "Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America."

"I think the key has been we've been able to come up with topics that are very timely," Greenfield said. "What we've been trying to do is give people the information

that they need at this time of life but also enable them to interact with their peers and talk about challenges at this stage and realize there are things within their control to make this a really positive time of life."

"Resiliency in the Face of Life Changes: The Mind-Body Connection" will be presented from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at the Newton Free Library at 330 Homer St. The discussion is sponsored by the library, the Massachusetts Coming of Age Coalition, and Service Opportunities After Retirement.