
Driving Fitness, Health, & Aging: Considerations for Safe Mobility

TOM MEUSER, PHD, PSYCHOLOGIST & APPLIED GERONTOLOGIST
RESEARCH ANALYST & COMMUNITY EDUCATOR (CONTRACTED)
MAINE BUREAUS OF MOTOR VEHICLES & HIGHWAY SAFETY



Audience

What motivates you to attend this presentation?

What questions, if any, do you have about this topic?

About the Presenter

Tom Meuser, PhD

Clinical Psychologist, Applied Gerontologist, & Social Scientist

Employed by the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety – Contracted
Safety Educator

Employed by the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles – Contracted
Analyst in Medical Section

Maine Mature Drivers Project

Key Concept

“Medical Fitness” to
Drive a Motor Vehicle
Safely & Responsibly

Is driving a...

RIGHT

PRIVILEGE

Health to Driving

What are the key tasks associated with driving a car safely and responsibly?

How can changes in health and/or function impact on a given person might perform these tasks?

Driving in the State of Maine

Licensing & De-Licensing Drivers is a Responsibility of the Secretary of State

Maine is a voluntary reporting state.

Anyone can report a driver as potentially medically unfit. The report must be in writing and is treated as confidential. One cannot be sued for making a report in good faith.

Issues of Concern for Drivers <50

Vision Loss

Serious Mental Health

Substance Misuse

Head Injury

Sleep Apnea

Cardiac Condition

Seizure Disorder / Loss of
Consciousness

What else can you think of?

Issues of Concern for Driver > 50

Same as < 50, and...

*** Dementia ***

Mild Cognitive Impairment

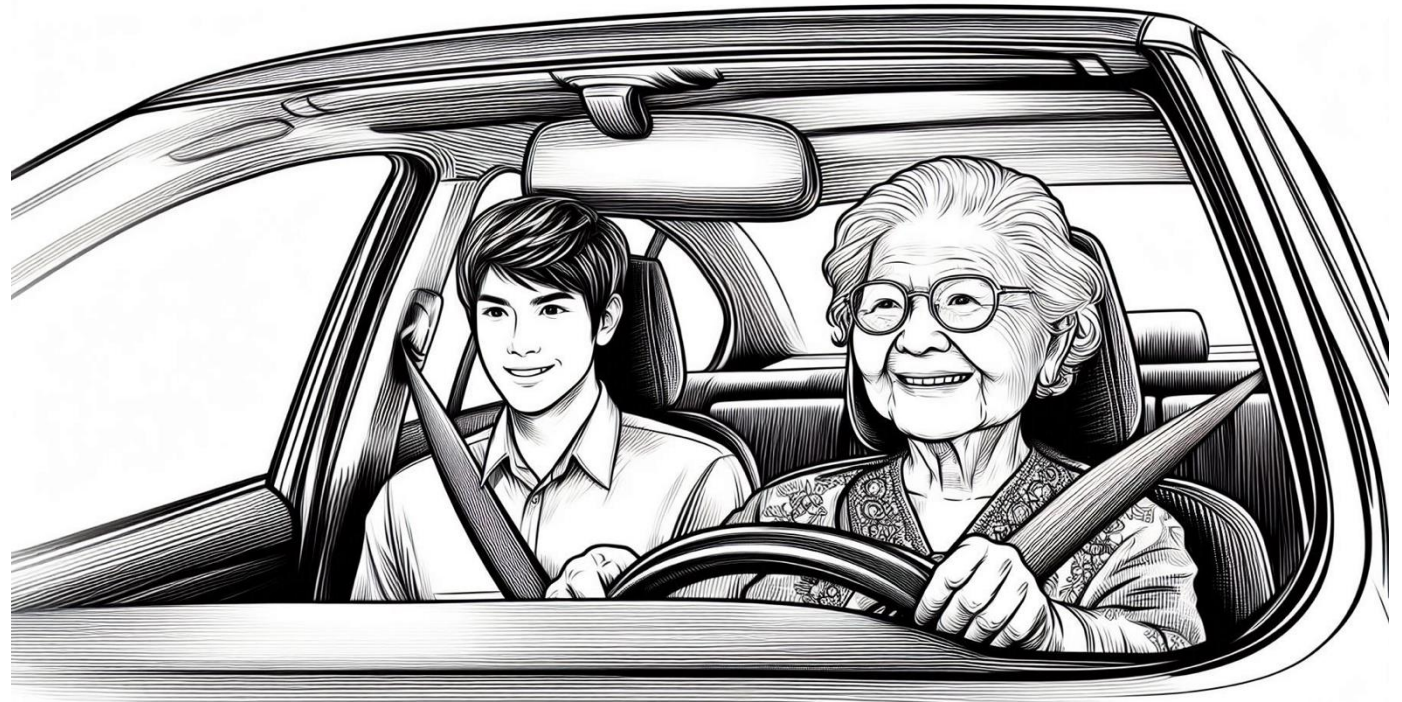
Stroke, Transient Ischemic Attack

Diabetes / Hypoglycemia

What else can you think of?

When it comes to roadway safety, older drivers are not a big problem...

“I’d rather drive cross country with a healthy 85-year-old woman behind the wheel than a healthy 16-year-old boy!”



Crash Risk & Injury/Death - Younger

- Invincibility
- Risk Taking
- High Speed
- Late Hours
- Crashes more likely to injure and/or kill
- Most states prioritize highway safety enforcement and education to this group for obvious reasons.

Crash Risk & Injury/Death - Older

- Aware of Mortality
- Risk Averse
- Slower Speeds
- Daytime Hours
- Crashes are less likely to injure and/or kill.
- ONE EXCEPTION – Older Drivers (aged 75+ in particular) are at risk of serious injury and/or death in even low speed crashes. Why?)

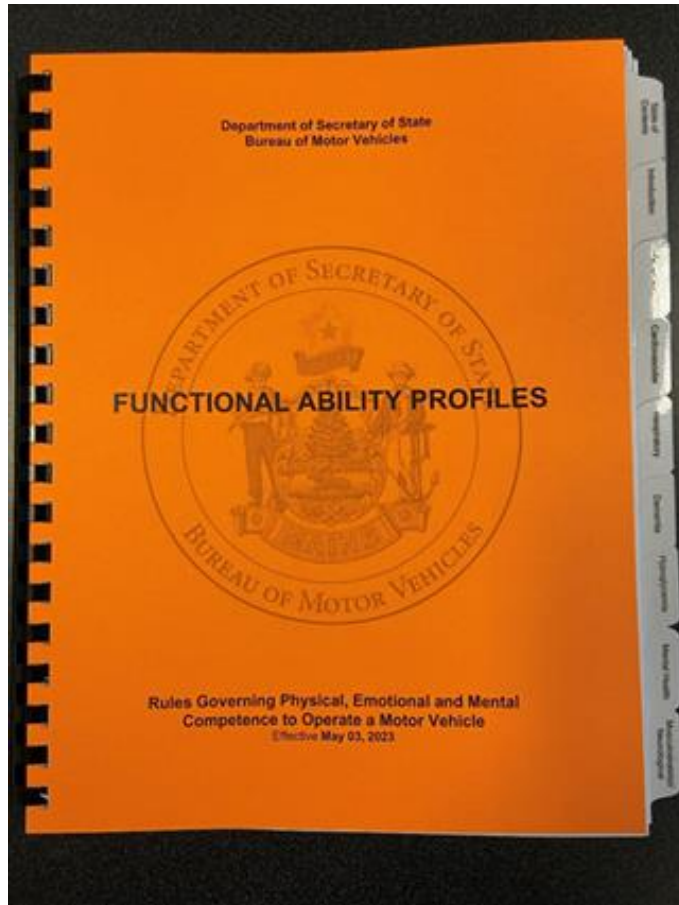


How do you know if someone is medically unfit to drive?

How does the BMV learn of a driver?

- ☐ Self-Report
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Physician or Health Professional
- ☐ Law Enforcement
- ☐ BMV Staff (e.g., at time of in-person renewal)
- ☐ Family, Neighbors, Friends
- ☐ Other Stakeholder (e.g., Minister, Local Government)

Functional Ability Profiles (FAP)



FAP Levels Defined:

1. No present diagnosed medical condition of concern for driving fitness.
2. A diagnosed medical condition exists but is fully treated and so not a concern for driving fitness at the present time.

FAP Level 3

- 3a. A diagnosed medical condition exists and impacts driving fitness to a mild degree only.
- 3b. A diagnosed medical condition exists and impacts driving fitness to a moderate degree. Typically, a driver must prove ongoing fitness by passing an on-road test.
- 3c. A diagnosed medical condition exists and impacts driving fitness to a severe degree. Immediate suspension or license revocation follows in 99% of cases.

Applying FAP Levels to Mr. Green

What did you notice about Mr. Green

- And how the police officer interacted with him?
- Is he medically fit to drive?
- Why? Why not?

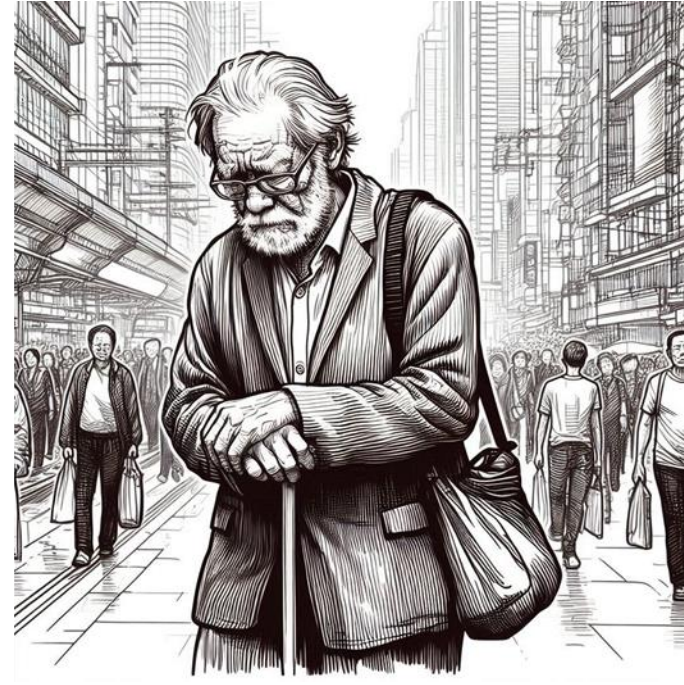
Psychology of Driving Retirement



Attitude Makes a Difference



Aging = Something to Manage



Aging = Something to Avoid

Subjective ≠ Objective

SUBJECTIVE

Andrew, 82, Widower

“Yeah, I can hardly walk down my driveway to get the newspaper in the morning.... yet I can still drive successfully to go to my bridge club, to church, and to visit with my grandkids who live 30 miles away. So, I can’t climb stairs without help any longer. Big deal! I’m still getting around for what matters to me and that’s what’s important.”

Subjective ≠ Objective

OBJECTIVE

Andrew, 82, Widower

- Overweight
- Diabetic*
- Mild Peripheral Neuropathy*
- Moderately deconditioned due to insufficient exercise*
- On multiple medications*
- Moderate Fall Risk*
- Mentally alert with good eyesight and neck range of motion*
- Safe driving record so far*

People respond differently...

John (Hit Parked Car 2 Weeks Ago)

- Age 81, Widower, Lives Alone
- 8th Grade Education
- Retired Carpenter
- Active in church, bowls in two leagues, delivers meals for the local AAA office.

“I love being active and giving back to my community. My car is my independence at this stage of my life. I can’t stand sitting home alone. I’m at my best when I can get out and do something productive.”

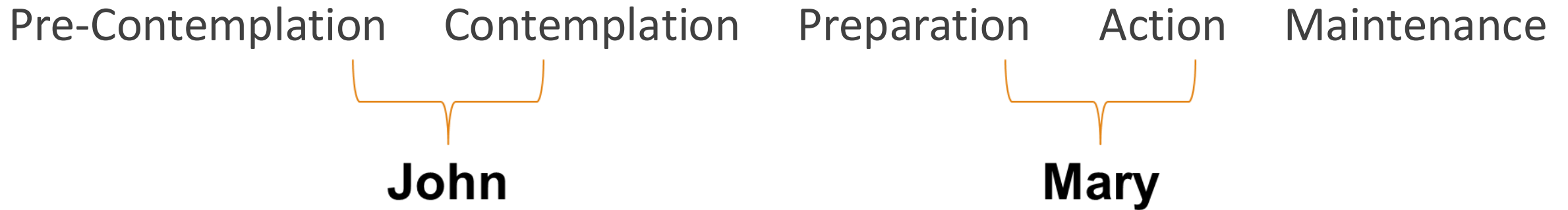
People respond differently (continued)...

Mary (Hit Parked Car 2 Weeks Ago)

- Age 74, Married, Caregiver
- College Degree
- Retired Executive Secretary
- Cares for her husband who has moderate Alzheimer's disease.

"He used to do all the driving, but now I have to. I question how long I can and really want to do this. I have an appointment next week to look at an apartment at a local Assisted Living facility."

Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)



Interpretation

- ❑ A person's attitudes, prior awareness, life situation, etc., all interact when it comes to a major event like a car crash.
- ❑ Hitting a parked car means something different to John than it does to Mary.
- ❑ John's facing the reality of aging and driving mobility in a new way and perhaps for the very first time. Mary is facing this reality after struggling as a caregiver and all that goes with that.
- ❑ Meeting people "where they are" is critical to the success of driving restriction and retirement discussions.

Individual Responses to Mobility Change

Self-Monitor & Self-Regulate as a Driver

Seek Input on your Driving from Trusted Others

Enroll in a Driving Fitness Course (e.g., AAA, AARP)

Purchase Vehicle with Strong Safety Technologies

Identify & Try Out Non-Driving Mobility Options

Share Rides with Family & Friends

Consider Moving to a New Location

What else?



Assessment of Readiness for Mobility Transition – Short Form (ARMT-SF)

A Tool for Self-Assessment, Future Life Planning, & Mobility Transition Counseling in Aging Adults

Instructions: Consider what might happen if you could not get yourself to valued destinations and activities independently. Maybe this is true in your life now; perhaps it could happen in the future. Read each statement below and consider if you agree or disagree and how strongly. Circle a number which best reflects your immediate response: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = mixed response; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

ARMT-SF		Strongly DISAGREE Strongly AGREE				
1	I am a burden if I ask others for help with transportation.	1	2	3	4	5
2	It is devastating for older people to have someone take away their car keys.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel depressed at the thought of being limited in my mobility.	1	2	3	4	5
4	There is no way to plan for loss of mobility in aging.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My future independence hinges on my ability to get myself around.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have not thought much about my future mobility before today.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I've seen others become frail and immobile in older age, and I am determined to avoid this fate at whatever cost.	1	2	3	4	5
8	It is not easy for me to ask for help with transportation when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5

Sum of Responses (Total Score) = _____ >28 High Risk

Non-Driving Mobility Options

Self, Family & Community

- Walking, Cycling
- Assistive Device
(cycle, wheelchair, scooter, walker)
- Rides with Family & Friends
- Local Volunteer Driver Programs
- Area Agency on Aging
- Hospital-Based Transportation

Formal Services

- ITN Portland
- Uber, Lift, Taxi
- City Buses
- Municipal Shuttles
- Commuter Rail, Train
- Organizational Shuttles



See a Certified Driver Rehab Specialist

www.pathwaysrehabservices.com



Heather Shields, OTR/L, CDRS, is one of the few certified driving evaluators in Maine. She lives in Brunswick and drives to evaluate her clients statewide. She evaluated my father in 2021.



www.aded.net

Another Terrific Resource

www.exchange.aaa.com



EXCHANGE

Advocacy. Communication. Education.

[About AAA](#) [Join AAA](#) [Visit](#)

[Automotive ▾](#) [Safety ▾](#) [Travel Planning ▾](#) [Transportation Funding ▾](#) [About AAA ▾](#) [Adulting with AAA ▾](#)

[Safety >](#)
[AAA School Safety Patrol >](#)
[Bicycle Safety >](#)
[Child Passenger Safety >](#)
[Distracted Driving >](#)
[Driving Advice >](#)
[Pedestrian Safety >](#)
[Roadway Safety >](#)
[Senior Driver Safety & Mobility ▾](#)

- AAA RoadWise Driver
- Evaluate Your Driving Ability
- Evolving Vehicle Technology
- Mobility Beyond Driving
- Senior Licensing Laws
- AAA's Advocacy & Additional Resources



[Home](#) » [Safety](#) » [Senior Driver Safety & Mobility](#)

Change Text Size

+

RESET

-

Senior Driver Safety & Mobility

Additional Resources

- The Hartford – We Need to Talk – Family Conversations with Older Drivers (www.thehartford.com)
- AAA Roadwise Review (www.seniordriving.aaa.com)
- CanDrive Driving & Dementia Toolkit for Health Professionals (www.candrive.ca)
- Older Drivers Education, NHTSA (www.nhtsa.gov/Senior-Drivers)
- AOTA Driving & Community Mobility (www.aota.org/older-driver)
- National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (www.nadtc.org/)

Your Questions & Comments

Evaluation: www.tinyurl.com/bdf885h5

