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Individuals are seen as coproducers of their social environments who actively manage the social resources that contribute to their positive aging. The regulation of social relationships reflects adaptive mechanisms of deliberate acquisition, maintenance, transformation, or discontinuation of relationships within the individual's personal network. Mechanisms of relationship regulation in later life are illustrated on the individual level with recent empirical findings on social motivation. Close emotional ties are relatively stable until late in life, whereas peripheral (i.e., not close) social relationships are preferably discontinued. Such patterns of change and continuity were found to reflect individual differences in goal priorities and in future time perspectives (i.e., subjective nearness to death). Proactively molding the social world in accordance with one's age-specific needs also contributes to subjective well-being. The regulation of social relationships is proposed as a promising venue for further research in this field that may also reflect key issues in social, emotional, and cognitive aging.

Reference:

Frieder Lang: Regulation of Social Relationships in Later Adulthood, in: Journal of Gerontology 56 (6) 2001, 321-326.