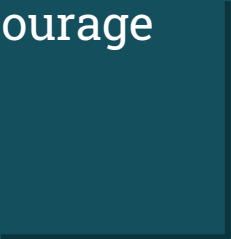




Anti-Ageism

A discussion on ageism and how we can encourage inclusivity and equity



What is Ageism?

According to the **World Health Organization**, “Ageism refers to the stereotypes (*how we think*), prejudice (*how we feel*) and discrimination (*how we act*) towards others or oneself based on age.”



What is Ageism (2)?

Ageism operates both **explicitly** and **implicitly**

- **Explicit Ageism**
 - Organized, conscious acts
 - Example: A doctor thinks that their patient's illness is "just part of aging" and is not providing correct assessments and/or treatments due to this.
- **Implicit Ageism**
 - Unconscious acts of categorizing people without being aware of it.
 - Guides our choices without recognizing it-which is why it is so important to acknowledge and unlearn our own implicit biases
 - Example: Unintentionally not including older populations in opportunities or social events because you assume they would not want to join



What is Ageism (3)?

Ageism is complex, let's break it down into **2 main categories**

- **Age-related stereotypes**
 - Age related stereotypes refer to how we think, feel, and react to older populations.
- **Age based bias, discrimination, and prejudice**
 - Bullying, victimization, and unfair treatment due to being “too old” or “too young”

Levels of Ageism

Ageism can be expressed at **multiple levels**:

- **As an individual**
 - Negative feelings towards getting older
 - Not seeking medical care because you are “too young to be ill” or are “just getting older”
- **Socially**
 - Treating older people as lesser than
 - Speaking slower to an older person with the assumption that they can’t understand you
 - Not including older people in activities, outings, etc. because they are “too old”
- **Institutionally/Culturally (Ohsu.edu)**
 - Lack of equitable programs for older people
 - Lack of supports for older people
 - Being refused medical care because “you’re just old” or because “you are too young to be sick”

Targets of Ageism

There are 2 main targets of ageism:

- Against Oneself
- Against Others

“Ageism can be directed at other individuals or “other-directed ageism”, such as when we think that other older people are slow or wise.

Or ageism can be directed towards oneself, “self-directed ageism”. For instance, one may have negative feelings regarding their own aging. Marques, S., et al. (2020)”

How does ageism present itself?

Ageism presents itself in a variety of forms such as:

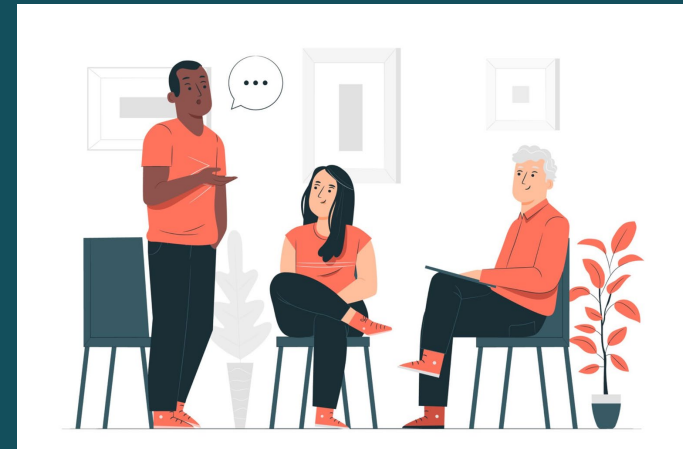
- In language or how we speak
- In assumptions
- In health care
- In the workforce/financial security
- In obtaining equitable supports
- Within ourselves
- In obtaining equitable opportunities and education

How does ageism present itself (2)?

How We Speak:

- “I’m having a senior moment”
- “You’re too young to be using the disabled parking spot”
- “Putting grandpa out to pasture”

- Describing the dynamic process of aging as a:
 - “Battle”
 - “Struggle”
 - “Fight”
- Describing older populations using othering terms such as
 - Ageing Dependents
 - Elderly
- Describing a growing population of older people as an incoming:
 - A tsunami, a tidal wave, a carnival



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How does Ageism present itself (3)?

In Incorrect Assumptions:

Incorrect Assumptions:

- Older people have nothing to contribute to society, so we do not need to include them
- Young people cannot be disabled or chronically unhealthy
- Getting sick is just a part of aging
- Aging is horrific
- Old people are terrible with technology

Reframing Assumptions:

- Everyone has something to contribute to society.
- Disabilities and Chronic illnesses do not discriminate and can affect all populations
- Aging is dynamic and deserves just as much medical intervention and attention as any other age group
- Older populations have not been provided with equitable education when it comes to technology

How does ageism present itself (4

In healthcare



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- Ageism can prevent us from obtaining proper medical attention and care
 - Symptoms overlooked due to the assumption that symptoms are “just part of getting older” or because the person is “too young to be sick”
 - Treatment may be denied due to discrimination
- Internalized ageism can prevent us from seeking medical attention
 - Assuming that aging isn’t dynamic and that getting old=getting sicker
 - Assuming that you are too young to be sick and that it is “all in your head”

How does ageism present itself (5)?

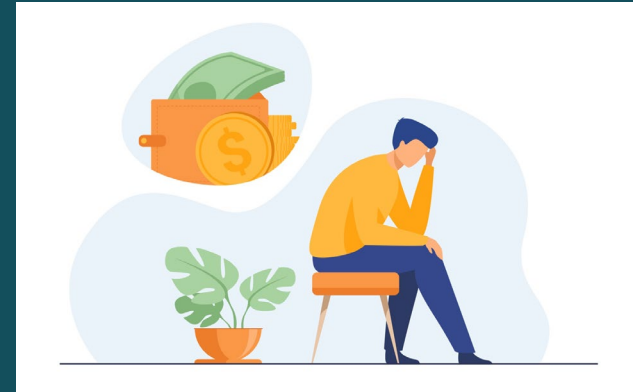
In Work and Financial Security :

“Ageism can affect people’s ability to get a job or keep a job. *Nearly three in five older workers say they have seen or experienced age discrimination. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, this situation has amplified, and the unemployment toll for older workers is the worst it has been in half a century.*” -reframingaging.org

How does ageism present itself?

In Work and financial security:

- Our society is structured around the incorrect ageist idea that:
 - a. The young work and are able bodied to do so
 - i. Leading to inequitable opportunities for financial insecurity for young disabled people who are expected to work-even when their bodies can not
 - b. The older do not work, do not want to work, and do not need to
 - i. Leading to inequitable opportunities for financial security for older populations



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How does ageism present itself (6)?

In Work and financial security:

- Many people cannot afford to retire, yet when they reach a certain age many cannot find places that will hire them

“Age discrimination hurts job opportunities, too, and, in turn, older people’s ability to pay for transportation, housing, groceries and medications. They’re also more likely to be isolated.”

- Dr. Rosen, Cedars-Sinai

- Due to the ageist structure of our society, there is a serious lack of programs and supports to ensure financial stability

How does ageism present itself (7)?

In equitable supports

- Due to the ageist structure of our society, there is a serious **lack of programs and supports** for people who do not fit the ageist “social norm”
 - Not all older populations can afford to retire
 - Not all older people want to stop working
 - Not all young people are able bodied and able to work
 - Not all older populations have the financial security needed to live out the rest of their lives
 - Lack of technological education opportunities for older populations

How does ageism present itself?

Within ourselves

- Ageism is highly tolerated in our society and is so socially acceptable that our society is completely built around it- including our own implicit biases
- Recognizing and combating ageism can positively impact the ability to
 - See ourselves as whole, regardless of age
 - See ourselves as capable and worthy of inclusion
 - Seek medical care when symptoms present themselves regardless of age
 - Access supports

How does Ageism present itself (8)?

Within ourselves:

“I’m having a senior moment”

- Reinforces Stereotypes
 - being unfit for society
 - Being “Othered”, that this is a subgroup that does not belong in the general population
 - Affects the younger populations as well. Seeing and hearing this phrase over and over again leads to the forming of implicit biases and self perceptions.
- Consequences:
 - Separates this population into a sub group that no longer has a space in the general population
 - Affects everyone’s perceptions of aging

Dangers Of Ageism

“Ageism impacts our society at large and people as individuals in many ways, affecting our health, employment, financial security, and self-perceptions.” -reframingaging.org

Dangers Of Ageism

In Health

- “For older people, ageism is associated with a shorter lifespan, poorer physical and mental health, slower recovery from disability and cognitive decline. Ageism reduces older people’s quality of life, increases their social isolation and loneliness (both of which are associated with serious health problems), restricts their ability to express their sexuality and may increase the risk of violence and abuse.” (ohsu.edu)
- “Ageism is associated with earlier death (by 7.5 years), poorer physical and mental health,” -WHO

Dangers Of Ageism (2)

In Health

- Studies show dementia tends to go unnoticed, with around half of people with symptoms lacking diagnosis. The Alzheimer's Association notes doctors and patients aren't having enough conversations about memory loss. Almost all primary care doctors wait until a patient or family member mentions it. (Cedars-Sinai)
- Ageism can lead to an individual not feeling safe enough to seek medical attention- regardless of age

Dangers Of Ageism (3)

In Work and Financial Security

- Ageism **impacts our society at large and people as individuals** in many ways, affecting our health, employment, financial security, and self-perceptions.
- “Ageism can affect people’s ability to get a job or keep a job. **Nearly three in five older workers say they have seen or experienced age discrimination.** Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, this situation has amplified, and the unemployment toll for older workers is the worst it has been in half a century-” [Reframing Aging](#)

Dangers Of Ageism: A Slippery Slope



Anti Ageism in Practice

So, we're able to recognize ageism- what now?

- change implicit biases
- Change the language
- Reframing assumptions
- Implement Equity

Anti Ageism in Practice (2)

Changing Implicit Biases

The first step toward overcoming implicit biases is to identify them

Once identified, be proactive in facing and addressing implicit biases by

- Changing language
- Reframing assumptions
- Striving for Equity

Anti ageism in practice

Changing Language

- Changing biases and attitudes can take time, **changing language is a great place to start**
- Remember that how we speak matters!
- Some examples of ageist language:
 - “I can’t be this sick, I’m too young”
 - “I don’t want to get senile and grey”
 - “My life will be essentially over after 40-there’s nothing left”

Anti Ageism In Practice (3)

Changing Language

- Changing the way that we speak about aging can lead to a positive domino effect
- For example, instead of describing ageing as a “struggle” or a “fight” we can refer to aging as a process that leads to new abilities and wisdom

Reframing assumptions

- Instead of negative assumptions around ageing, let's reframe them:
 - Everyone has something to contribute to society.
 - Disabilities and Chronic illnesses affect all age populations
 - Aging is dynamic and deserves just as much medical intervention and attention as any other age group
 - Older populations have not been provided with equitable education when it comes to technology

Aging is not a bad thing, and it's ok to say so! Aging is dynamic



Anti Ageism in Practice (4)

Equity

“Ageism gets less attention, but treating everyone fairly throughout their lives is part of providing equitable care,” [Christina Harris, MD](#),



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Anti Ageism In Practice(5)

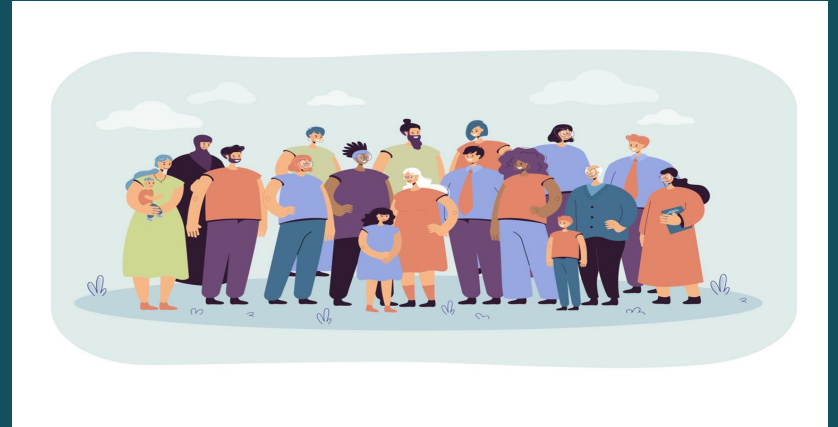
Equitable Support services

According to Next50, equitable support services for an inclusive and anti ageist society looks something like this:

- Affordable housing or homelessness prevention programs
- Caregiver or direct care workforce support and services
- Access to public benefits assistance, including financial literacy programs
- Legal assistance services, including fraud prevention and education
- Access to tech literacy programs

Anti Ageism In Practice (6)

Intersectionality : a framework to analyze the interlocking effects of oppressed people with multiple marginalized identities experience.



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“Intersectionality overlaps with racism and other forms of discrimination, making accessing healthcare even harder for certain individuals as they get older.”- Cedars-Sinai

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