

# Challenging Ageism



## Ageism – what is it?

Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people based on their age. For older people, ageism is an everyday challenge. Overlooked for employment, restricted from social services and stereotyped in the media, ageism marginalises and excludes older people in their communities.

Ageism is everywhere, yet it is the most socially “normalised” of any prejudice and is not yet widely opposed like racism or sexism. It not only leads to discrimination and isolation of older people but also significantly impacts their overall health and wellbeing.

## Why should we think differently about ageism?

No matter our age, we are all getting older. If we are lucky, will live long enough to be considered an older person. Discriminating against older people now is the same as discriminating against our future selves.

By changing the way we think about getting older we have the opportunity to work together to create a society where every person is valued, connected and respected, regardless of age and health. Positive community and self-perceptions about ageing are good for all of us.

## How do we change?

1. Firstly, we need to **become aware of the attitudes and behaviours** we currently hold which are ageist. You can start by taking this fun [2-minute quiz](#) to find out more.
2. This short [video](#) developed by the EveryAGE Counts campaign is useful in helping to see what a **future without ageism** might look like.
3. We can practice **replacing some of the myths about ageing with the facts.**

Myth	Fact
All older people live in nursing homes	<b>Only 5% (1 in 20)</b> of older people live in residential aged care
All older people are the same	Older people range in age from 65 – over 100. Just as a 10 year old is very different to a 30 or 40 year old, ‘older’ people have different interests and abilities too.
Getting older means getting sicker	Some older people experience poor health but many are just as healthy as their younger peers.
Older people are grumpy and unhappy	Due to pressures linked to work and family, middle aged people have been shown to be the unhappiest. As we get into our 60’s and 70’s we become happier because of our life experiences and the ability to appreciate what we have.
Most people end up with dementia when they’re older	<b>Only 10% (1 in 10)</b> of people over 65 in Australia develop dementia. Even when we get to over 85 this figure only rises to 30% (3 in 10).

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### 4. Become aware of, and change our language

We can become aware of, and change, the language we use. Words, terms and phrases such as the ones below reinforce the idea that older people are less capable, less worthy, less useful ...simply less.

Words and terms			
old fogey	young lady	sweet old dear	good for his age
old fart	fossil	dear	love
geezer	old bag	biddy	little old lady
crone	over the hill	codger	decrepit



Phrase	Why it's ageist
Grandpa is too old to do that	Using phrases like this reinforces to young people that old people are less able. If Grandpa can't get on the floor to play because he has a sore knee or sore back – this is what we need to say, not that he is too old.
You can't teach an old dog new tricks	Older people are very capable of learning new things. They may learn differently to younger people or even take more time to learn a new skill, but they can still learn.
60 is the new 30	Phrases like this suggest that the 'better' age is the younger age. Each age is different and there is nothing wrong with that.
She had a senior's moment	We all forget simple things. When a young person can't find their keys we don't say they had a 'youth moment', we accept their absentmindedness as normal. Being older shouldn't change the way we view this.

### 5. Spend time with people of all ages.

Nothing breaks down barriers and assumptions about others like spending time with them to discover what they are really like.

- Strike up a conversation with the person next to you in a queue – no matter what their age is
- Get to know the older people at your sporting or other club
- Look at older people you admire – newsreaders, actors, writers – learn more about their interests and activities today
- Contact your older relatives often and take some time exchanging ideas and sharing your common goals
- Ask your grandparents or older family friends to join in community activities/events, gardening and craft
- Consider volunteering opportunities that bring you into contact with older people – either by working alongside someone older than you or helping someone older