

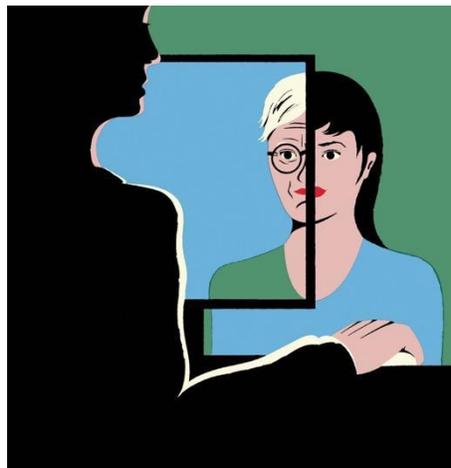
seniors first BC

IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING AGEISM

Ageism can be defined as the attitudes such as discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping toward an individual because of their age, and is commonly experienced among older adults (Nemmers, 2005). This blog post will survey some forms of ageism, how ageism can affect people, and some ways to combat ageism.

Ageism has become socially accepted in society because of profit-seeking industries and the media's goal to emphasize and favour "youthfulness" in terms of appearance and behaviours (Officer & de la Fuente-Núñez, 2018). The media perpetuates ageist assumptions by promoting unrealistic expectations, and very little coverage of older adults. As a result, we often see individuals trying to stay young, or keep their youthfulness, whether that means through avoiding wrinkles, keeping active, making bold decisions, or dressing a certain way. These behaviours have been socially constructed to be indicators of "youth". However, individuals who do not strive for this should not be shamed or viewed as "wrong".

Ageism can influence one's physical, mental and emotional health, and therefore, it is extremely important that individuals, communities, and healthcare providers among others work towards combating ageist stereotyping.



(Golden Cosmos, 2017)

What are some ways in which ageism occurs?

- Assuming someone obtains a certain trait based on age-related stereotypes
- Exaggerating beliefs of an individual based on their age
- Excluding individuals based on their age
- Assuming that an individual is incompetent because of their age

An example of ageism is when someone assumes that an older adult has poor hearing, so they initiate speech with an exaggerated volume to the individual. This individual may or may not have poor hearing, but regardless, their age does not reflect auditory health.

A common phrase that has an underlying ageist message is: *You can't teach an old dog new tricks.* This suggests that older adults are incapable of learning new things. However, it is falsely assumed that because someone has lived for more years, they must have some cognitive decline.



(Blow, 2016)

Does it always hurt someone?

No, ageism can be expressed in positive or negative terms. For example, an older adult may not be offended if someone assumes they are wise or experienced in a certain area. The assumption, however, may have been made solely based on the older adult's age.

How can we combat ageism?

It has been suggested that engaging youth and healthcare students with older adults can promote a reduction of ageism. This can help broaden one's exposure to older adults, emphasize individuality and uniqueness, and facilitate a greater understanding of the current discrimination that older adults often face.

Campaigns to increase educational awareness can be beneficial; gaining community support can increase resources, support services, and work towards changing societal expectations of aging. Inclusivity of individuals of all ages must be promoted in all areas of a community (and society).

It is important for society to reflect on the fact that we are all ageing, and we are all in the direction of becoming older adults if we aren't already. How do we want others to treat us? Do we want to surround ourselves with media that excludes a large portion of the population? Educating yourself and others on the topic of ageism can increase awareness to the discussion and encourage individuals to stand up for others and provide support when they see ageism occurring.



(Kinnard, 2018)

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER GEORGIA GRENIER FOR WRITING THIS BLOG!

REFERENCES

- Blow, P. (2016). *Baby boomers are taking on ageism- and losing*. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/baby-boomers-are-taking-on-ageism--and-losing/2016/08/03/43d6664c-120c-11e6-8967-7ac733c56f12_story.html
- Golden Cosmos. (2017). *Why ageism never gets old*. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/20/why-ageism-never-gets-old>
- Kinnard, K. (2018). *Ageism is hurting your tech company's hiring more than you realize*. Battery. <https://www.battery.com/powered/ageism-is-hurting-your-tech-companys-hiring-more-than-you-realize/>
- Nemmers, T. M. (2005). The influence of ageism and ageist stereotypes on the elderly. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics*, 22(4), 11-20.
- Officer, A., & de la Fuente-Núñez, V. (2018). A global campaign to combat ageism. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 96(4), 295.