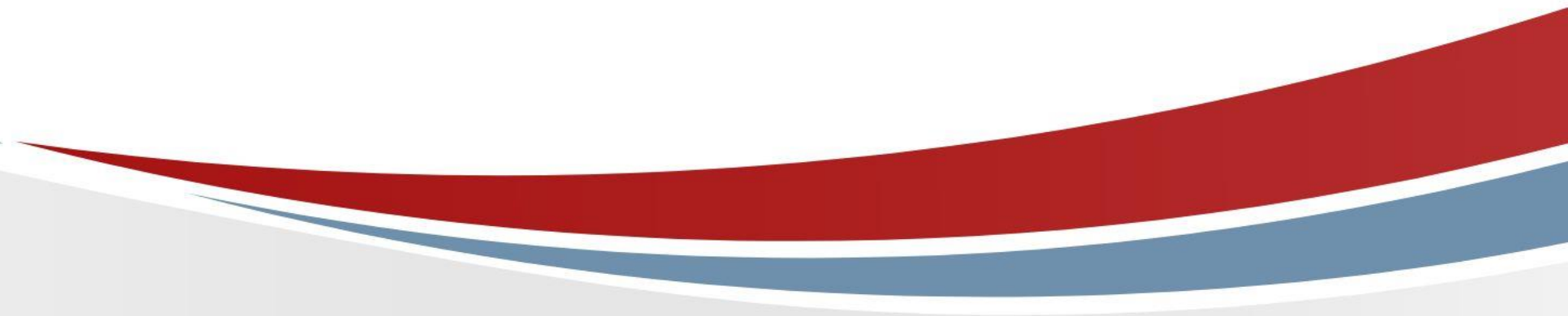


ReThinking Aging

Thriving Across the Life Course

2026 ABCD Festival ~ Goa, India





Parksville- Qualicum Beach: Canada's "Retirement Capital"



PARKSVILLE-QUALICUM
**Community
Foundation**



What is Ageism?

*The stereotypes (**how we think**), prejudice (**how we feel**), and discrimination (**how we act**) towards others or oneself based on age*

- Only ism not formally recognized, although everyone is affected if they live long enough
- Is not inevitable. It's learned, normalized—and changeable
- Is embedded in policies, workplaces, and services
- Leads to poorer health, social isolation, earlier deaths, and cost economies billions

In 1969, psychiatrist Robert Butler coined the term “ageism”, describing it as a systematic stereotyping process, illustrating how negative stereotypes activate discrimination, leading to a dehumanizing view of older adults.



AGEISM

A QUICK LOOK AT THE STIGMA
OF GETTING OLDER



Stigmatizing Words:

Old Geezer
Elderly
Senior Citizen
Dinosaur
Old-Timer
Pops



By 2030 the percentage of people age 65 and older is expected to increase to almost 20 percent... can we get rid of the stigma before it affects 1/5 of the population?



What is Ageism?

Ageism is characterized by discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age.

Why is Ageism a Problem?

Ageism can impact someone's confidence, job prospects, financial situation, and quality of life.



64% of workers say they have seen or experienced age discrimination in the work place



1 in 5 workers in the United States is age 55 or older



58% of adults believe age discrimination begins among workers in their 50's

How Society Views the Aging Cycle



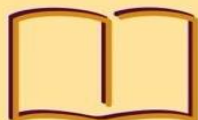
Stigma is everywhere...



RESTAURANTS



TV



MAGAZINES



WORK



ORGANIZATIONS



Age Discrimination in Employment Act - 1967:

protects workers 40 and older from personnel decisions based solely on age in hiring, firing, layoffs, promotions, and demotions. The act applies to employers with at least 20 workers.

Equality Act - 2010:

older people are protected from ageism in employment, training and education, and in memberships of clubs and associations.

What will YOU do to end the stigma?

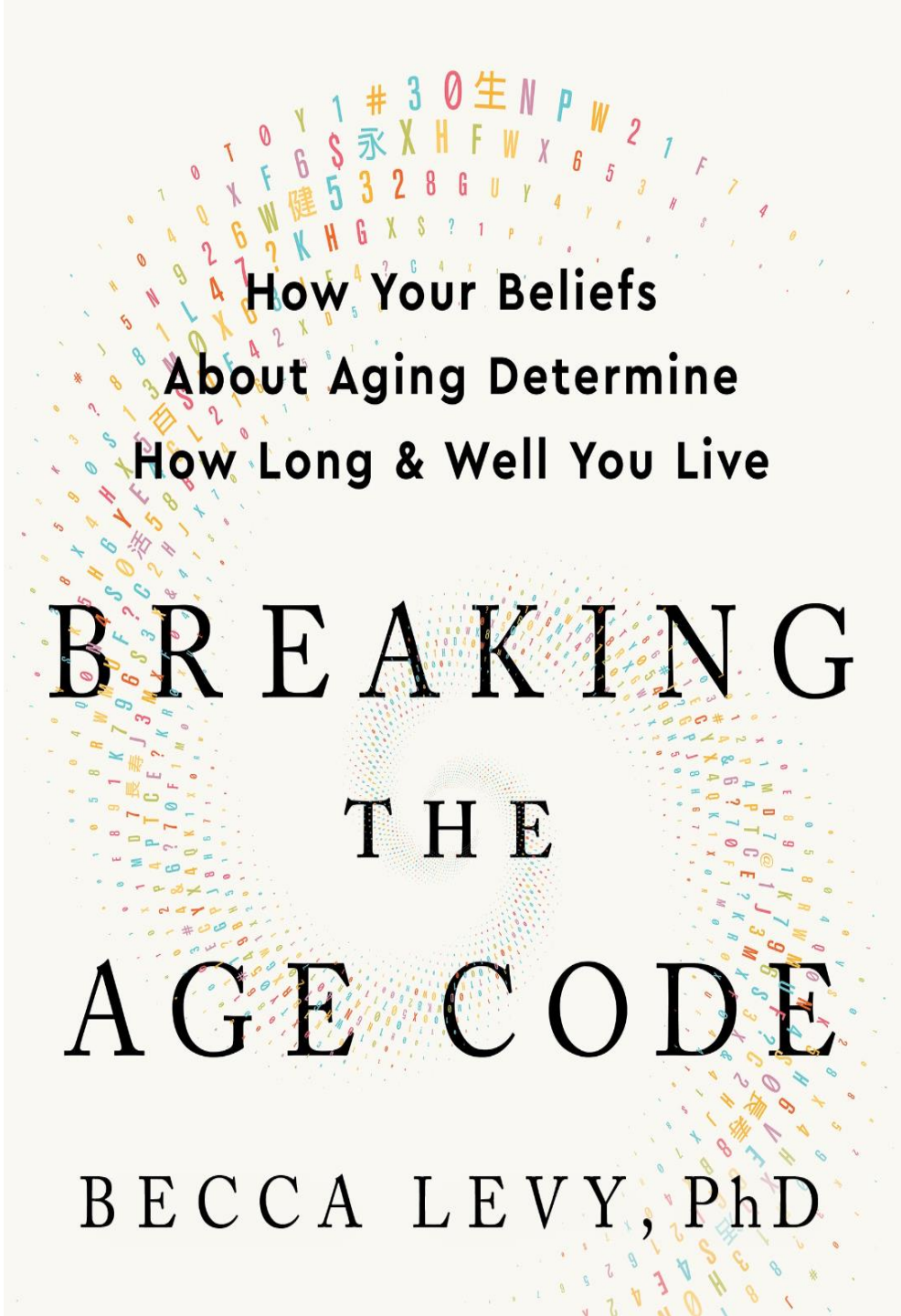


Impacts of Self-Ageism, Culture, and Asset-Based Views of Aging

People with more positive beliefs about aging live significantly longer than those with negative beliefs. In a long-term study of adults over 50, Levy found that those with the *most positive views of aging lived about 7.5 years longer* on average compared with those with the most negative views.

“Societal age beliefs, not genetic factors, significantly determine health outcomes, drawing a correlation between cultural influences and individual health trajectories.”

“Recognizing the value of older adults’ knowledge and adopting positive attitudes towards aging can enhance cognitive performance across the lifespan.”



How Your Beliefs
About Aging Determine
How Long & Well You Live

BREAKING
THE
AGE CODE

BECCA LEVY, PhD

Recognizing Ageism as an Important Issue – finally!

Campaigns



AU EveryAGE Counts (Australia)

IE For Equality in Ageing (Ireland)

GB Age Without Limits (UK)

CA Canadian Coalition Against Ageism

Proposed UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

- Comprehensive framework to promote and safeguard the rights of older persons, covering areas such as healthcare, social protection, employment, and participation in decision-making processes.
- Now being drafted by UN Human Rights Council

In Canada

- **Some individual efforts**, eg. elder abuse organizations; Age-friendly communities; grassroots groups
- **United Way British Columbia's** developing network of Community-Based Seniors Services organizations
 - Provincial CBSS Consultations (2018-19) identified ageism as an important issue to act on
 - **GOAL:** Shift societal thinking to view aging through a more realistic, asset and evidence-based lens
 - Development of workshops; drafting of **Ageism program principles**
 - Creation and launch of **ReThinking Aging ToolKit** in 2019
- **National Consultation on Socio-Economic Impacts of Ageism:**
 - Priority of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers for Seniors
 - Literature Review; official and unofficial consultations; online story submissions; final report
- **International Longevity Centre – Canada**
 - ReThinking Aging Toolkit transferred to ILC-C in 2023
 - ILC-C launches Canadian Coalition Against Ageism

ReThinking Aging - Principles

Intersectional: recognizes that different forms of oppression, power, and control reinforce and compound each other, eg. racism, sexism, inequality

Asset-based: appreciates the gifts and contributions of individuals and communities

Evidence-based: uses research and evidence as a basis for awareness, education, policy work, and other strategies

Authentic: honest, genuine, and purposeful in words and actions

Curious and open-minded: assumes there is always more to learn; actively looking and listening for other perspectives and ideas

Respectful: of different perspectives, beliefs, and choices

Inclusive –welcomes all genders, ethnicities, and abilities, and takes into account their situations, challenges, contributions, and perspectives

Rights-based: recognizes the importance of ensuring understanding and protection of rights, especially for those who are more vulnerable

Intergenerational: recognizing that everyone benefits when people of all ages interact with each other

Balanced: celebrates benefits of aging with acknowledgement of disadvantages that come with aging

Realistic: understands that aging involves loss; that aging affects different people in different ways

Generative and dynamic: as a sector co-creation, new perspectives, ideas, and contributions will continue to emerge, and broaden and deepen learning over time

Language: considers the power of words and stories

Holistic and integrated: includes individuals, organizations, community, and sector, and leverages the relationships among them



Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
Coalition Canadienne Anti-Âgisme

CCAA
is a
social change
campaign to
eliminate ageism

Our Aim: To transform

1. Policies
2. Practices
3. Power dynamics
4. Social norms
5. Mindsets that underlie ageism

Our Approach: We drive change by:

1. Investing in **evidence-based strategies**
2. Improving **data and research**
3. Shifting the **narrative around age and ageing**

Our Method:

1. A multi-year, multi-pronged collaboration across sectors and disciplines for **collective impact**
2. Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination and sustained commitment by key actors to solve complex social problems through a **shared vision & agenda**

Vision

A Canada free of
ageism against
older people



Objectives

- Co-develop a national campaign to eliminate ageism against older people.
- Base the campaign on WHO's evidence:
 - 1) Education
 - 2) Intergenerational relations
 - 3) Policy and law reforms
- Ensure all actions strengthen and promote older people's human rights. Maximize campaign success through collective influence and collaboration.

If you're
not
careful
you'll
get lost
here
and find
that
where
you end
up
is better
than
where
you had
planned
to go

Ageism Toolkit



Human Rights do not have a best before date
Support a U.N. Convention on the Rights of Older Persons



Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
Coalition canadienne anti-âgisme



Human Rights do not have a best before date
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ReThinking Aging

*A toolkit to raise awareness
and generate dialogue about ageism*

- Created by United Way B.C. Healthy Aging in response to requests from community-based seniors serving organizations for workshops and resources to talk about ageism
- Tools developed and tested with various audiences
- Launched at 2019 B.C. Healthy Aging Summit
- Transferred to International Longevity Centre – Canada in 2023 for Canadian Coalition Against Ageism campaigns

Gray Hair Cost Her Her Job!

She was willing and capable, but gray hair made her look old and slow. "A younger woman would work more snappily," was the verdict.

Gray hair *does* make a person look old, but gray hair is an unnecessary burden. Today, many women—and men—know that a mixture of sage tea and sulphur actually restores gray, faded or streaked hair to its original life and color. You can either prepare the mixture at home yourself, or more conveniently, buy it already prepared and ready to use. All druggists carry it in the form of Wyeth's Sage & Sulphur, and since the cost is only 75c a bottle, there is really no need to prepare it yourself. You simply moisten a comb or soft brush with it and draw it through your hair, one strand at a time. One application banishes the gray and one or two more completely restore your hair to its original color, so evenly, so naturally that no one can possibly tell you have used it.



Talking About Aging

Challenging the Conversation



Changing the Conversation



- Activating conversations
- Examining how we think and talk about aging
- Exploring how we can disrupt the current discourse
- Raising awareness
- Fostering behavior change

The New York Times

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

After Going Gray, a News Anchor Found Herself the Focus of the Story

Lisa LaFlamme was dismissed after a decades-long TV career, not long after she stopped dyeing her hair, setting off debates across Canada about sexism, ageism and going gray.

Share full article



1.1K



ReThinking Aging Tools

- Ageism Cinema
- Ageism Audit for Organizations
- Flip the Myths
- Appreciative Aging
- Postcard to Myself
- Health Determinants
- Words Matter! The Language of Aging and Ageism
- Junctions - Intersections of Age, Identity, and Life Circumstances
- Ageism Old and Young
- Internalized Ageism (Self-ageism)
- Family Agreement -Respect Across Ages
- “Age Swap Day” Challenge





Each Tool includes:

- Introduction/ Background
 - What does ageism mean?
 - Why does it matter?
- Objective of this activity
- Who can do this activity?
- Suggested time required
- Supplies
- Format

Words Matter!

The Language of Aging and Ageism



Language conveys meaning, and our choice of words and phrases can feed assumptions and judgments, both intentionally and unintentionally. Over time, repetition and usage patterns infiltrate conversation, media, and popular culture, leading to age stereotypes and discrimination.

What words and phrases do you think are ageist?



What words and phrases could be used instead?



Activity: Words Matter

Objective of this activity: This activity aims to raise awareness about how language conveys meaning, and choice of words and phrases can feed assumptions and judgments about age - intentionally and unintentionally.

Who can do this activity? Students (all ages), general public, workplace; community groups

Suggested time required: 20 – 45 minutes

Supplies: Pre-printed poster board, flipchart, or whiteboard; markers; Post-it Notes; sample language guides

Resources: [Quick Guide to Avoid Ageism in Communications](#)
[Don't call me "old": Avoiding ageism when writing about aging](#)

Format: This activity can be used in workshops, focus groups, and exhibits/displays.

Words Matter Activity

Format: This activity can be used in workshops, focus groups, and exhibits/displays.

In workshops or focus groups:

Introduce the activity with the definition of ageism; ask participants why they think it matters. Then ask: *What words and phrases do you think are ageist? What words and phrases could be used instead?* Discussion can be among the whole, or in small groups with a report back. Discuss the examples, along with ideas for how people can be more aware of ageism in language and challenge it when they see or hear it.

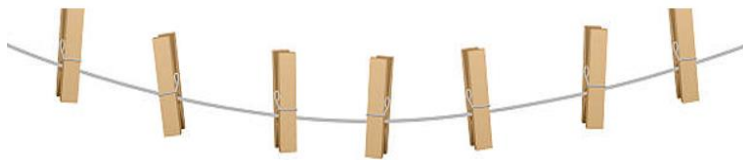
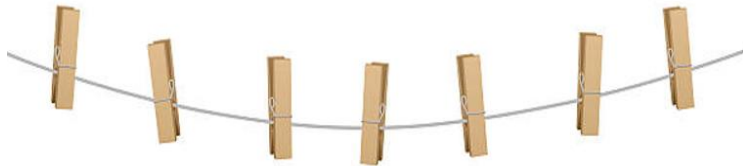
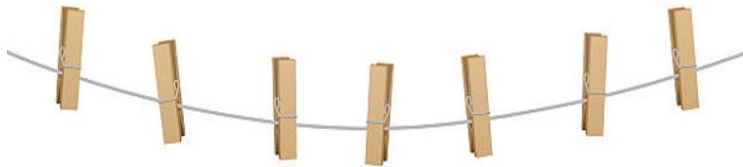
Exhibits displays:

Encourage visitors to think of examples to post, along with their non-ageist substitutes. Have posters, markers, and Post-it notes located so that people can easily write their responses and post them on the boards or flipcharts OR have them write directly on the boards.



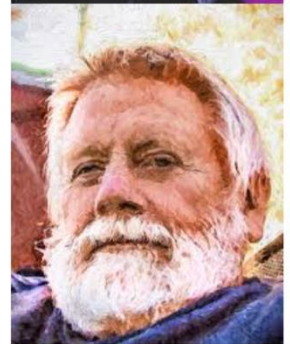
Postcard to Myself

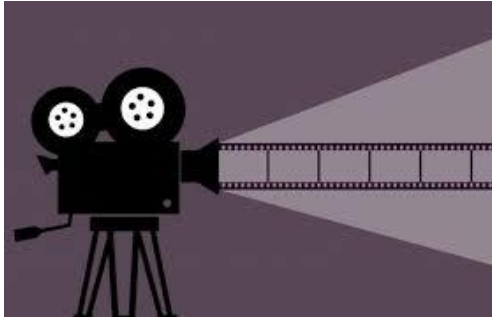
Write a postcard with advice to
your older self and to your
younger self and hang it on the
clothesline for others to read



**Thinking about when you were a
teen or young adult, but with your
knowledge of the present, what
message would you give to your
younger self?**

**Looking ahead to when you are 85
years old and with the knowledge
of your present-day self, what
message would you give to your
future self?**





Ageism Cinema



Australia

APIA [Are our perceptions of age distorted?](#) (3:44)

Every Age Counts (animation) - [Imagine a world without ageism](#) (2:38)

[Health Professionals Against Ageism](#) (2:56)

Ashton Applewhite (USA)

[Aging Isn't A Curse. But Ageism Is A Serious Global Problem](#) (3:42)

HelpAge (International)

[Ageism is all around us - hear how it affects older people around the world](#) (2:25)

Revera (Canada) [Age is More: Meet Marina Hromadka](#) (3:30)

AARP (USA)

[Change What it Means to Age #DisruptAging](#) (1:29)

[Age Discrimination Food Truck Experiment](#) (2:14)

[Millennials Show Us What 'Old' Looks Like](#) (4:08)

[People Over 40 Denied Free Samples in Social Experiment](#) (2:09)

[Just Say No to Ageist Comments](#) (52)

[Hollywood is Finally Embracing Aging](#) (1:36)

UK [Experiences of Ageism in Recruitment](#) (3:52)



Young and Old Experiences of Ageism



How is ageism experienced by younger people:

In the workplace?

In health care systems?

In the community?

In families?

How is ageism experienced by younger people:

In the workplace?

In health care systems?

In the community?

In families?

How can older and younger people address ageism together?

Assumptions
of
laziness, sense
of entitlement.

Young and Old Experiences of Ageism

How is ageism experienced by younger people:

In the workplace?

Wood R. Williams
Racism towards
health care
professionals
including
physicians

- idea that young people don't have enough knowledge, experience
- stereotypes that we deserve instant gratification
- idea that we don't know how to connect outside of technology in the real world

The importance to have open conversation between generations to learn from one another and not have biases about the ages of the people.

In the community?

- Community:
 - focus more on intergenerational learning
 - education on belonging ^{more}
 - Engage more with ability more so than age
 - ~~Engage more~~

Limited access
to building as
too many steps,
hallways too
narrow. Don't
include the
absent voice

In health care systems?

Housework:

- Leadership
- Needs to be lead through financial & leadership.
- Education & awareness
- this is also a part of workplace
- transparency, Employment expectations & all the employees to have some knowledge →

Lack of ~~understanding~~
understanding of
the unique &
specific needs
of older adults.
Aging ^{gerontology} still not
a focal point in
health care
professionals
curricula!

When I was "young"
people assumed I had
no relevant/meaningful
experience of mental
illness because I had
my youth."
I was dismissed.

Not to label reasons
or conversation with
"age". For example,
"as people age..." or
"It's because you are getting
old..."

Families

Society issue

→ Need training
by parts, that
serve the
- integral of group is
understood

→ Focus is mostly
+ on children &
their affect - or
doing

Jokes to
grandparents/
parents re:
Incontinence or
threats to place
in Nursing Home

As young people
we tend to
view the needs
of seniors very
strongly through the
lens of our own
elders which can
~~be a very distorted~~
limit our vision of
what the needs
of a senior are.

Health Determinants Simulation Game



*Roll the dice and explore the effects of
inequities, protective factors, and risk factors
on healthy aging!*

This game is best used with groups of four or more players in order to demonstrate and discuss differences in health resulting from factors such as race, education, class, income, and social support networks. It also explores how personal choices, environment, and social and political decisions can influence some determinants of health, while recognizing that some health determinants can't be changed.



Activity: Appreciative Aging

Appreciative Aging *Nurturing asset-based attitudes on aging using appreciative questions*

What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word "Aging"?



What is something you have become better at with age?

Appreciative Aging *Nurturing asset-based attitudes on aging using appreciative questions*

You are never too old to:



You are never too young to:

At any age, you can find:

Appreciative Aging *Nurturing asset-based attitudes on aging using appreciative questions*



If you knew you would live to be 100, what would you give yourself permission to learn, start, or do at age:

30

40

50

60

70

80

90

Appreciative Aging *Nurturing asset-based attitudes on aging using appreciative questions*

*When have beliefs about your age stopped
you from pursuing something you wanted to do?*



*What can you be doing now to create
more opportunity in your future?*

Appreciative Aging *Nurturing asset-based attitudes on aging using appreciative questions*

*What are some qualities of your
ideal environment, place, or
community to grow old in?*



*What one change would improve
your community for older adults?*



Flip the Myths!

There are many common myths and misconceptions that perpetuate ageist attitudes and contribute to stereotypes and discrimination against older adults.

To counter ageism and help shift society towards viewing aging through a more realistic asset and evidence-based lens, it's important to challenge the stereotypes and “flip the myths”.

Flip the Myth cards provide examples of common assumptions about aging, and on the reverse side, provides evidence that challenges and counters the ageist narrative.

Ageism Audit Checklist

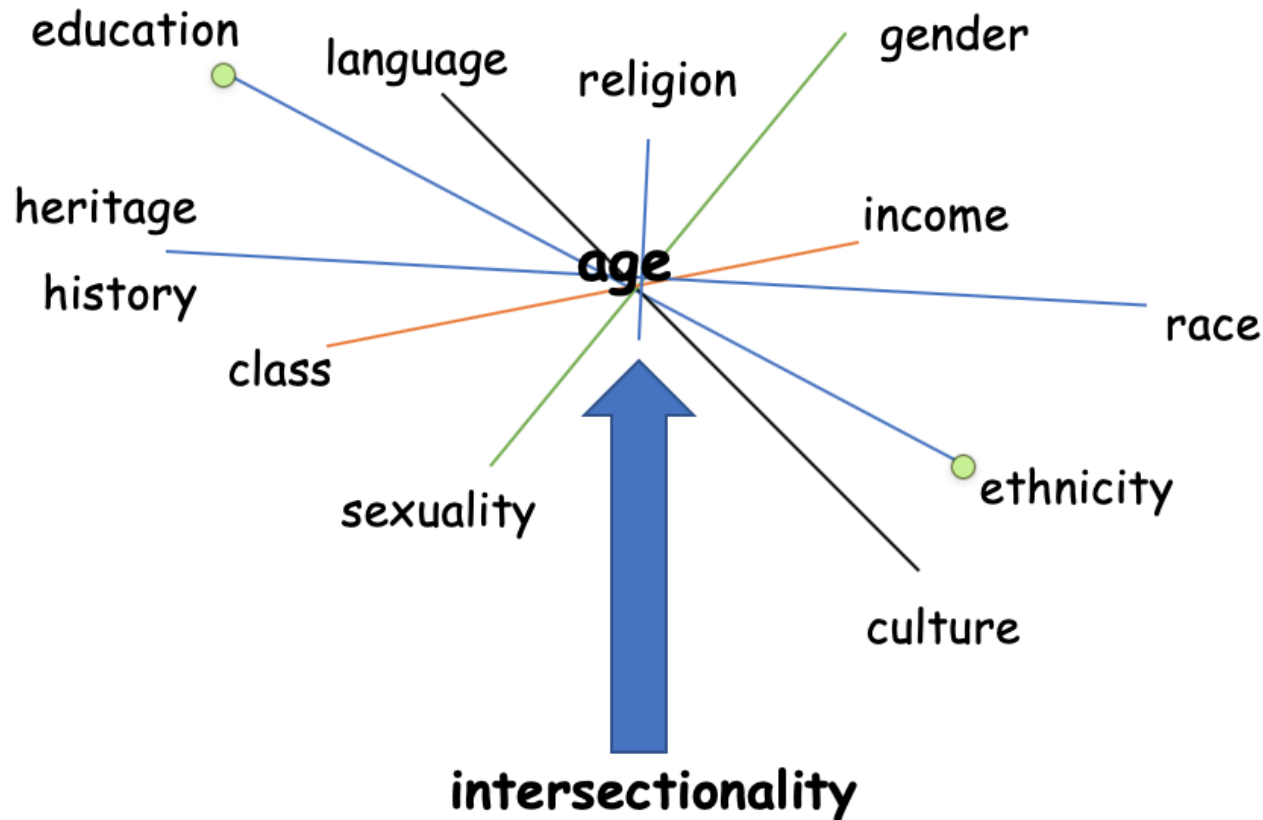
Designed to assist organizations assess whether interactions with staff, volunteers, and clients are conducted in a respectful manner regardless of age.

The aim is to:

- think about how we can challenge ageism and ensure our attitudes and behaviours/actions are supportive to people of all ages
- be intentional in our efforts to eliminate ageism in our workplace
- model an inclusive and non-ageist organization to other groups in our community.

Intersectionality and Ageism:

How Gender, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Culture, Ethnicity, History, Race, Class, and Income exacerbate ageism



What examples can you think of that can help illuminate the concept of intersectionality and the added challenges of aging and ageism experienced by some groups?

Intergenerational Family Activities

Family Agreement – Respect Across Ages

Objective: to get family members (and others) to think about ageism, to discuss how to avoid it within family units and to create a short “Respect Across Ages” pledge

Age Swap Day Challenge

Objective: to get family members to think about ageism by swapping roles for a few hours, a day (or a weekend)



