

# A Generation's Work: Reframing Aging Together

LiveOn NY Senior Center Workshop Initiative  
October 14, 2020

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## Today's Presenters



Trish D'Antonio  
Vice President of Professional Affairs  
The Gerontological Society of America



Linda Schotthoefer  
Associate Vice President of  
Community Initiatives  
United Way of Miami-Dade

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## The Gerontological Society of America

*Advancing Innovation in Aging*

**Professional membership organization – 5400 members**

**Mission –**

- Promote multi- and interdisciplinary research in aging
- Translate and disseminate research findings
- Foster application of research into policy development
- Promote/advocate for education/awareness on aging across disciplines



**Nurture an interdisciplinary environment that optimizes the health and well-being of an aging society**



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**Ageism is...**

Have you seen ageism?

Have you experienced ageism yourself?

Can you identify a time when you have been ageist?

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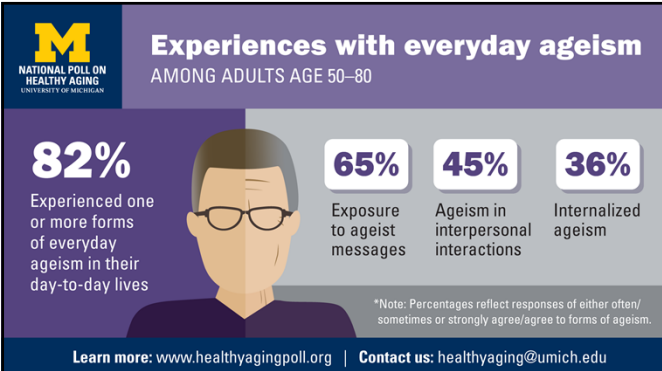
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**82%**  
Experienced one or more forms of everyday ageism in their day-to-day lives

**65%**  
Exposure to ageist messages

**45%**  
Ageism in interpersonal interactions

**36%**  
Internalized ageism

\*Note: Percentages reflect responses of either often/sometimes or strongly agree/agree to forms of ageism.

Learn more: [www.healthyagingpoll.org](http://www.healthyagingpoll.org) | Contact us: [healthyaging@umich.edu](mailto:healthyaging@umich.edu)

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### Ageism is....

- Discrimination against persons of a certain age group, especially older adults
- Tendency to regard older persons as debilitated, unworthy of attention, or unsuitable for employment

**Implicit ageism:**  
subconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors one has about older or younger people, generally negative

**External and internal ageism:**  
perpetuated by others; perpetuated by the self

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### Ageism's Impact on Health

Unfavorable Stereotypes in older adults

- chronic stressor in the lives of older adults
- lower self-perceptions of aging, impacting behavior & health

Negative age attitudes and beliefs

- predict worse cognitive performance
- predict the development of Alzheimer's disease biomarkers

**17.04 million cases of the 8 most expensive health conditions in one year attributable to ageism.**

- Highest in cardiovascular disease due to heightened cardiovascular stress (*The Gerontologist*, 2018)
- \$63 billion spent on health care
- \$1 in every \$7 spent (*The Gerontologist*, 2015)

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### Ageism & Age Discrimination

- One in 17 adults over age 50 experience frequent healthcare discrimination, and this is associated with new or worsened disability by 4 years (*Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 2015)
- About three in five older workers (61%) have either seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace despite 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act. (AARR 2018)

**The Good News**

- Positive self-perception leads to 7.5 years longer, healthier lifespan (*The Gerontologist*, 2015)
- Older persons with positive age beliefs who carry one of the strongest factors for developing dementia were nearly 50% less likely to develop the disease than their peers who held negative beliefs. (PLOS ONE)
- Recent research shows that interventions are effective in reducing ageism



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**M**  
NATIONAL POLL ON  
HEALTHY AGING  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### Positive views on aging

AMONG ADULTS AGE 50-80

- 88%** Feel more comfortable being themselves
- 80%** Have a strong sense of purpose
- 67%** Feel more positive about aging
- 65%** Think their life is better than they thought it would be

Learn more: [www.healthyagingpoll.org](http://www.healthyagingpoll.org) | Contact us: [healthyaging@umich.edu](mailto:healthyaging@umich.edu)

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## Reframing Aging

A Social Change Endeavor designed to improve the public's understanding of aging

@ReframingAging

Original research conducted by the FrameWorks Institute and sponsored by the Leaders of Aging Organizations

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Situate yourself in the field of aging and aging-related services.

**How does your work help to turn the gears of older people's wellbeing or of aging-related outcomes?**

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**Why Framing Matters**

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**When a Frame "Works," It Shifts Thinking in Multiple Ways**

	Knowledge increases
	Attitudes improve
	Support for policies and programs grow

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**Shared communications lead to systems change**

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**Communications**  
 Program providers  
 Funders  
 Researchers  
 Media  
 Advocates  
 ...

**Discourse**      **Thinking**      **Policy and Practice**

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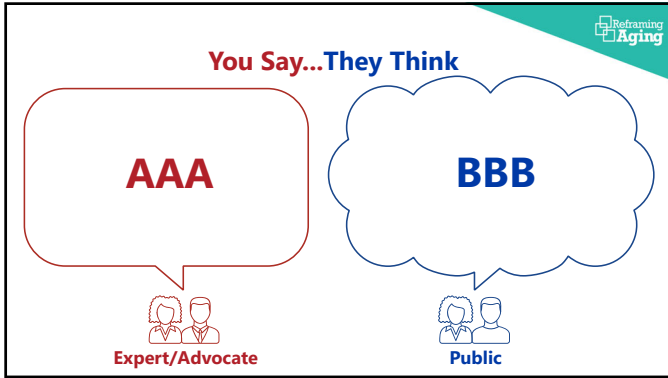
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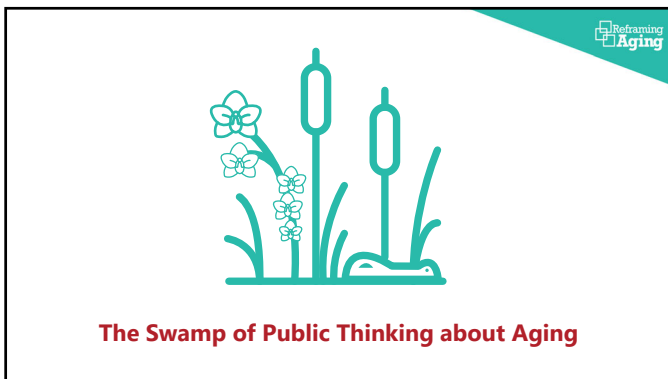
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## Challenges

What is in the swamp of...  
**Aging**



**Ideal vs. Perceived "Real"**

- Accumulated Wisdom
- Self-sufficiency
- Staying active
- Earned leisure
- Deterioration
- Loss of control
- Dependency
- Determinism

**"Us" vs. "Them"**

- Older as "other"
- Zero sum
- Digital incompetence

**Solutions**

- Fatalism/Crisis—nothing can be done
- Better individual choices and planning
- More education and information

**Individualism**

- Lifestyle choices
- Financial planning

**Nostalgia and Threat of Modernity**

- Family dispersal
- Economic challenges
- Social Security is doomed

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## Opportunities

What is in the swamp of...  
**Aging**



**What Surrounds Us Shapes Us**

**Collective Responsibility**

**Problems can be solved**

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## Identify the Swampy Messages

**From Consumer Reports:**

"All of this amounts to a senior transportation predicament that will only grow more urgent with the arrival of the Silver Tsunami, a demographic monster wave that will swell the 65-and-older population to a projected 74 million in 2030 from 46 million in 2015."

<http://www.consumerreports.org/elderly-driving/how-seniors-are-driving-safer-driving-longer/>

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**Identify the Swampy Messages**

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**Identify the Swampy Messages**

**The New York Times: Trump Budget Cuts Programs For Poor While Sparing Many Older People**  
 Taken together, the cuts represent a significant reordering of the social safety net, away from poor families and toward older Americans, regardless of income. Medicare would be untouched, and the main function of Social Security — retirement income — would flow unimpeded. (Alcindor, 5/22)

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**Multiple Models Available**

Choose the Cues that Activate Productive Models

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**Telling a New Story about Aging Using the *Embracing the Dynamic Narrative***

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**An Effective Narrative**  
Builds understanding, shifts attitudes, generates support for policy solutions

Why does this matter?  
Values

How does this work? If it's not working, why not?  
Metaphors

What can we do about it?  
Solutions

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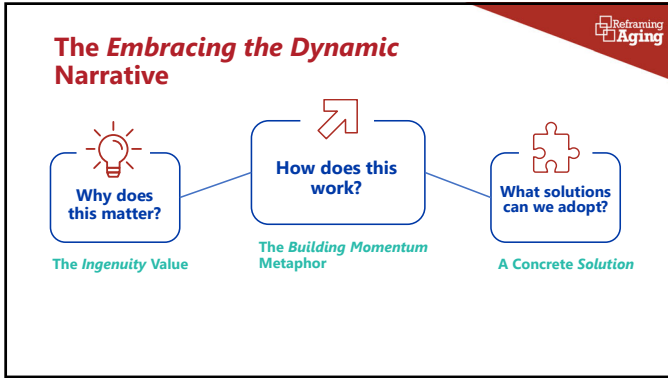
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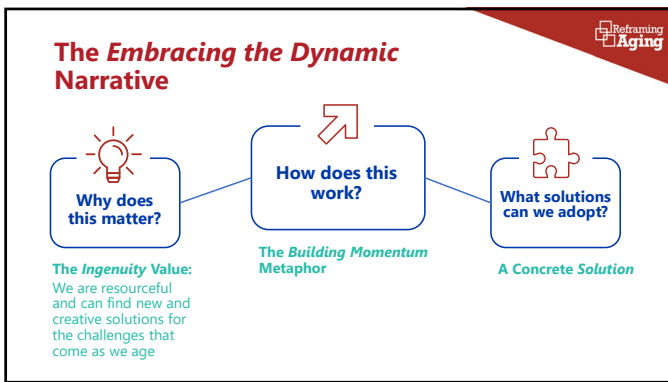
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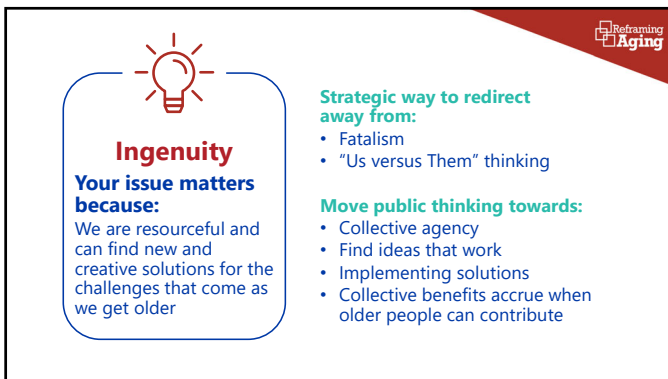
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Before

Studies show that Experience Corps works. After one year, many students who work with Experience Corps volunteer tutors achieve as much as 60% improvement in critical literacy skills compared to their peers. Volunteers provide an average of 6-15 hours of support each week throughout the school year.

The Experience Corps approach is simple, but effective. As an anti-poverty strategy, AARP Foundation Experience Corps is helping to provide both older adults and children with opportunities to enrich their lives through literacy.

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Reframed with Ingenuity

Solving our society's challenges requires us to think creatively about what resources we have available. Experience Corps is a perfect example of this kind of ingenuity. Experience Corps volunteers are older adults who provide 6-15 hours of tutoring to students each week.

After one year, many students in the program improve their critical literacy skills by as much as 60% compared to peers. By tapping into the talent and energy of older adults, the Corps is a smart way to help both children and older people to thrive.

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Which example best uses the Ingenuity value?

A	If we don't start coming up with better ways to solve our aging crisis, we're doomed. Government, business, the nonprofit sector . . . all of us . . . need to start finding more innovative solutions, and fast
B	We've solved difficult problems before as a society -- remember CFCs and the hole in the ozone layer? -- and we can find solutions to our demographic challenges, too. We just need to be resourceful and put our best ideas on the table.
C	It may require some resourcefulness and creative problem-solving, but the average family can manage the challenges that come with older age.

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**Which example best uses the Ingenuity value?**

**A** If we don't start coming up with better ways to solve our aging crisis, we're doomed. Government, business, the nonprofit sector . . . all of us . . . need to start finding more innovative solutions, and fast.

**B** We've solved difficult problems before as a society -- remember CFCs and the hole in the ozone layer? -- and we can find solutions to our demographic challenges, too. We just need to be resourceful and put our best ideas on the table.

**C** It may require some resourcefulness and creative problem-solving, but the average family can manage the challenges that come with older age.

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**A Reframing Aging Narrative: Embracing the Dynamic**

**Why does this matter?**  
The Ingenuity Value

**How does this work?**  
The Building Momentum Metaphor: As we get older, we build momentum, which powers us to take up new ideas and advance toward new goals. This energy invigorates our society and moves our communities forward.

**What solutions can we adopt?**  
A Concrete Solution

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**Explanatory Metaphors Help You Navigate the Swamp**

- Using metaphors to explain works because we think in metaphor
- Metaphors channel attention to certain features of an issue and redirect attention away from others
- Metaphors help people remember important points
- Metaphors are sticky and pass easily from person to person



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## Building Momentum

**The story you are telling:**

As we get older, we gather momentum, which powers us to take up new ideas and advance toward common goals. This energy helps move our communities forward.

**Redirect away from:**

- "Us versus them"
- Aging as discrete categories
- Decline and deterioration
- Aging as a "battle" or "fight"
- Dependency

**Move thinking towards:**

- Aging as opportunity
- Policies support well-being as we age
- Collective benefits accrue when older people can contribute

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## Before

Our expectations and dreams for our future are higher than ever before -- most of us strive to remain independent and lead fulfilling lives as we grow older. Understanding the home and community-based service options that exist today and convening ideas and plans for developing and innovating new service models will provide valuable insight and opportunities for the future of aging services. Working collaboratively to strengthen existing services and identify new service opportunities will bring communities together to facilitate solutions.

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## Before

Our expectations and dreams for our future are higher than ever before -- most of us strive to remain independent and lead fulfilling lives as we grow older. Understanding the home and community-based service options that exist today and convening ideas and plans for developing and innovating new service models will provide valuable insight and opportunities for the future of aging services. Working collaboratively to strengthen existing services and identify new service opportunities will bring communities together to facilitate solutions.



## Reframed with Momentum

As we age, we build momentum -- wisdom, insights, rich experience -- that "powers up" our communities. Improving the home and community-based service options that allow us to remain rooted in our communities as we age makes it possible for older people to continue contributing that momentum to our social and civic life. Working collaboratively to strengthen services and identify new opportunities will bring communities together to facilitate solutions that can help older people make the most of the energy, power, and dynamism that comes with aging, and that benefits us all.

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 **Framing Practice** 

**Using Building Momentum Creatively**

Brainstorm ways to convey the concept of *Building Momentum*:

- Synonyms (words and phrases)
- Antonyms (opposites)
- Images
- Expressions

Chat your ideas into the Chat Box.

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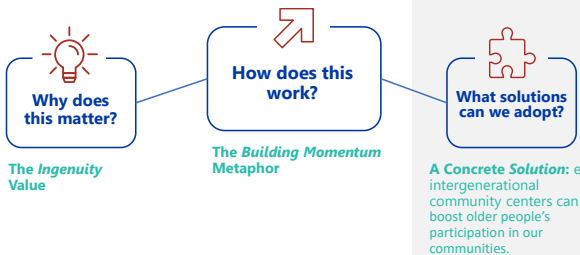
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**A Reframing Aging Narrative: Embracing the Dynamic** 



**Why does this matter?**  
The Ingenuity Value

**How does this work?**  
The Building Momentum Metaphor

**What solutions can we adopt?**  
A Concrete Solution: e.g., intergenerational community centers can boost older people's participation in our communities.

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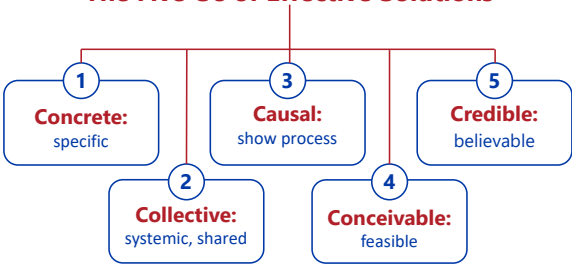
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**The Five C's of Effective Solutions** 



**1 Concrete:** specific

**2 Collective:** systemic, shared

**3 Causal:** show process

**4 Conceivable:** feasible

**5 Credible:** believable

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**Inventive solutions**

**Intergenerational Community Centers**

Our communities are better when they include the full scope of our energy. When we overlook the contributions of older adults and young children, the energy in our communities is diminished.

The emergence of intergenerational community centers is changing that. These inventive programs help turn the experiences and wisdom older people have accrued over a lifetime into a resource that helps power our neighborhoods, enhancing life for all of us. For example, children tend to build stronger social and emotional skills when they interact with older people, setting them up for a lifetime of good experiences.

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**Telling a New Story about Aging Using the *Confronting Injustice* Narrative**

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**The *Confronting Injustice* Narrative**  
A social issue story about ageism

**Why does this matter?**  
The Justice Value

**How does this work?**  
A Definition of Ageism  
An Explanation of Implicit Bias

**What solutions can we adopt?**  
A Concrete Solution

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**A Reframed Aging Narrative:  
Confronting Injustice**

**Why does this matter?**

**The Justice Value:** Our society should treat older people as equals and ensure they have meaningful opportunities to contribute.

**How does this work?**

A Definition of Ageism    An Explanation of Implicit Bias

**What solutions can we adopt?**

A Concrete Solution:

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**Justice**

**Your Issue Matters Because:**  
We are marginalizing older people's participation and minimizing their contributions.  
To live up to our ideals, we must confront the injustice of ageism.

**Redirect away from:**

- "Us versus them"
- Individualism
- Solutions = More Information

**Move public thinking towards:**

- Aging as opportunity
- Contexts and environments matter
- Ageism as a problem to solve

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**Framed with Us vs. Them, Fatalism**

Feelings of loneliness and isolation can lead to serious consequences for senior health. The effects of social isolation are as real as hunger, thirst or pain. Understanding the causes and risk factors for senior isolation can help us prevent it. There are many factors that contribute to senior isolation. Many of today's seniors have lost a spouse, have a lack of transportation, or have retired. Regardless of what causes senior isolation, the consequences can be harmful. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with a higher risk of mortality in adults aged 52 and older.

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### Framed with *Us vs. Them, Fatalism*

Feelings of loneliness and isolation can lead to serious consequences for senior health. The effects of social isolation are as real as hunger, thirst or pain. Understanding the causes and risk factors for senior isolation can help us prevent it. There are many factors that contribute to senior isolation. Many of today's seniors have lost a spouse, have a lack of transportation, or have retired. Regardless of what causes senior isolation, the consequences can be harmful. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with a higher risk of mortality in adults aged 52 and older.

### Reframed with Justice

All Americans have a right to participate fully in our democracy, our economy, and our community life. But our society starts to exclude us as we age. Americans are living longer, but our systems and structures haven't been updated to match that reality. Instead, workplace policies, transportation systems, and other features of daily life can isolate and marginalize older adults – with consequences ranging from increased health risks to less vibrant and diverse communities. To build a more just society, we need to take steps to prevent social isolation of any group. Including older people.

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### A Reframed Aging Narrative: Confronting Injustice

**Why does this matter?**

The Justice Value

**How does this work?**

A Definition of Ageism: Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative stereotypes. One impact is that capable older people are left out of the workforce.

An Explanation of Implicit Bias

**What solutions can we adopt?**

A Concrete Solution

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### Definition

Ageism is defined as discrimination based on negative assumptions about age.

In our country, ageism against older people has a big impact on older people's lives.

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**Example**

Take employment: ageism prevents older people from contributing to the workforce.

For example, managers commonly use age-based assumptions to evaluate job-seekers' applications. Even though older people score especially high in leadership, detail-oriented tasks, writing skills, and problem solving, employers assume older people are less capable. As a result, employers are less likely to interview job candidates whose graduation dates indicate they're more than 50 years old. That has cascading effects, because unemployed older people are much more likely to remain unemployed long term.

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**A Reframed Aging Narrative: Confronting Injustice**

**Why does this matter?**  
The Justice Value

**How does this work?**  
A Definition of Ageism

**What solutions can we adopt?**  
A Concrete Solution

*An Explanation of Implicit Bias:* We form subconscious negative judgments about people based on their age. Knowing about these biases makes us less likely to act on these "snap judgments" and more likely to treat people fairly.

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**Explaining Implicit Bias**

Implicit biases are attitudes and stereotypes we are not aware of. We form these subconscious negative judgments about many things, including age.

Knowing about these implicit biases makes us less likely to act on these "snap judgments" and more likely to treat people fairly.

*Research shows that exposure to an explanation of "implicit bias" – what it is and how it works to perpetuate ageism – actually reduces people's implicit bias towards older people.*

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Reframing Aging

Try using language like this in your messages about ageism:

"We all subconsciously form negative judgments about people based on their age, but just being aware of these biases makes us less likely to act on them and more likely to treat people fairly."

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### A Reframed Aging Narrative: Confronting Injustice



**Why does this matter?**  
The Justice Value

**How does this work?**  
A Definition of Ageism    An Explanation of Implicit Bias

**What solutions can we adopt?**  
A Concrete Solution: Public policies that address systems problems and generate collective benefits, e.g., better workplace practices or implicit bias trainings.

Reframing Aging

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### Five Steps to Using the Confronting Injustice Narrative

- 1 Use the value *Justice* to establish why ageism matters.
- 2 Define ageism -- don't assume people know what it is.
- 3 Offer a concrete example like workplace discrimination to illustrate the effects of ageism.
- 4 Explain how implicit bias works to perpetuate ageism.
- 5 Provide a tangible, system-oriented solution to expand people's thinking about how to fix the problem.

Reframing Aging

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<p><b>Avoid</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual action drives aging outcomes</li> <li>• Aging is the process of decline</li> <li>• Older people as other</li> <li>• Aging (population) is a crisis</li> <li>• Fixed, finite resources</li> <li>• Just another -ism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context shapes decisions and outcomes</li> <li>• Future is a time for improvement</li> <li>• We are all better off by being inclusive</li> <li>• Interventions can change outcomes</li> <li>• Solution stories: systems, supports</li> <li>• How ageism works</li> </ul>
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## Reframing Elder Abuse

**NCEA**  National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) at <https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Reframing.aspx>

**Resources:**

- Talking Elder Abuse Toolkit
- FrameWorks Academy video series "Reframing the Conversation on Elder Abuse"



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## Reframing Aging Research and Resources

[www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)

 <p><b>Gauging Aging</b></p> <p>Compares the public's perception of aging with that of aging experts and explains how the disconnect presents challenges for building support</p>	 <p><b>Reframing Aging and Ageism</b></p> <p>Access this free Video Series to hear the research findings and learn how to apply the reframing aging tools</p>
 <p><b>Finding the Frame</b></p> <p>Identifies six narratives dominating conversation in the media and in advocacy organizations</p>	 <p><b>Finding the Frame:</b> An Empirical Approach to Reframing Aging and Ageism</p> <p>Explains the process and research behind the evidence-based narratives shown to improve attitudes about aging</p>

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## What can I do?

Practice using the tips on the Quick Start Guide

Learn about the Swamp of Public Opinion on Aging and other research on the Reframing Aging Initiative webpage ([www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org))

Take the Implicit Association Test to measure your implicit bias (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>)

Call out ageism when you see it or hear it

Request a workshop or presentation for your organization



www.reframingaging.org

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## Reframe Cards and Quick Start Guide




**Integrity**  
We have choices about our lives.



**Building Momentum**  
Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities.



**Justice**  
We have choices about our lives.



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Instead of these words and cues:	Try:
"Tidal wave," "tsunami," and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people	Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: "As Americans live longer and healthier lives..."
"Choices," "planning," "control," and other individual determinants of aging outcomes	Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: "Let's find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age."
"Seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "other-ing" terms that stoke stereotypes	Using more neutral ("older people/Americans") and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms
"Struggle," "battle," "fight," and similar conflict-oriented words to describe aging experiences	<b>The Building Momentum metaphor:</b> "Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities."
Using the word "ageism" without explanation	Defining ageism: "Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes."
Making generic appeals to the need to "do something" about aging	Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions



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 **Practice** 

**Using Building Momentum**  
Use the *Building Momentum* metaphor to explain some aspect of your work on aging-related issues. Here's an example:

*I'm Nancy, and my work makes sure that all the energy of older people is available to move our communities forward. I run a program that keeps everyone connected by making sure older people have safe and affordable housing.*

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**Thank you!**

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