

RESPONDING TO AGEISM

It can be hard to think of what to say in the moment when faced with comments we didn't expect or which are hurtful. If we're really honest, sometimes we can be on either side of this experience. It's too easy to lean on generalizations and stereotypes of other generations. So what to do? Think ahead!



ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO THINK DEEPER.

For instance, if someone says a politician, writer or artist is “too old” or “too young,” we might answer, “I try to think about what they are doing, not how old they are.”

OFFER A COUNTEREXAMPLE

For instance, when someone uses a stereotype about older people and technology: “My friend is great with technology. She taught me to use my smartwatch.” Gently challenge people who say “all Boomers” or “all Millennials” do something. We might respond with: “Why do you believe that?” or “What experiences have you had?” or “Have you ever been stereotyped because of your age? Tell me about that.”



TAKE AGE OUT OF THE EQUATION

It's not “you look great for your age;” it's just “you look great.” Older people are not “young at heart.” We never stop learning and growing.

BE CURIOUS

If someone expresses something new to you, ask about it. Don't assume that it isn't worth knowing if it comes from someone older or younger.



ASK QUESTIONS

“What is something you have learned from someone older or younger than you?”

Let's not let age separate us. When we challenge biases, including our own, we can learn from everyone at every age.

