

# Ageism in Healthcare: Challenges & Responses

These are a few examples of healthcare interactions between older adults and providers based on feedback from our workshops. Please expand on these suggestions and make them your own to advocate for care that aligns with what matters most to patients.

The Challenge	Patient Response	Provider Response
<p><b>The invisible patient</b></p> <p>This happens when a provider does not make eye contact with the patient &amp; only speaks to the care partner.</p>	<p>Ask your provider to speak directly with you. If you brought someone else along, let your provider know that they can share information with you both.</p>	<p>Speak directly with the patient first. Address information to them, unless told otherwise. Ensure you're at the same level and make eye contact with the patient.</p>
<p><b>"Because of your age"</b></p> <p>A provider may say this in response to a patient's health concern or diagnosis. It implies there are no options and feels disempowering to patients.</p>	<p>This should not be the end of the conversation. Your chronological age is not the sole determinant of your health. Ask for clarification and options to consider, such as alternative therapies, or a different specialist.</p>	<p>With curiosity, ask for more information about your patient's health concern. What are their health goals, what matters to them about their daily activities.</p>
<p><b>Elderspeak</b></p> <p>This is speaking to an older person as though they are a child, in a simplified or slower manner. Research has found it makes older adults feel incompetent and disrespected.</p>	<p>"I'd prefer it if you called me _____"</p> <p>"Would you please explain that in more detail?"</p> <p>"Thanks but I'm capable of doing that myself."</p>	<p>Elderspeak often comes from good intentions, but it can make a person feel inferior and incapable. Speak to an older adult the way you would like someone to speak to you.</p>