

ENDING AGEISM TOGETHER

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

INTERGENERATIONAL
CONVERSATIONS

Facilitator Toolkit

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Welcome

Thank you so much for agreeing to facilitate an intergenerational conversation about ageism. Intergenerational conversations are [one of the proven ways](#) that we can reduce ageism. Whether you are hosting an in-person conversation or a virtual event, we hope you will find this useful.

Any movement requires everyday people to become involved. Your willingness to host a conversation and to invite friends and colleagues helps to build the movement to end ageism!

Why are we doing this?

Ageism—the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age—is pervasive! It can be directed at younger people and older people. It can also show up in our own self-beliefs, which is called internalized ageism. Ultimately, it reduces opportunities and diminishes us all.

The good news? Research shows education and intergenerational connections are effective methods for reducing ageism. When we come together to share our perspectives, our attitudes shift about age and people of different ages. We can discover what we have in common. We can all participate in reducing our biases and take concrete steps in our lives to reduce ageism.

When we first launched our **on the same pAGE intergenerational campaign** in 2019, we reached people across the U.S. and in 23 countries outside the U.S.! Our motivation to develop an intergenerational toolkit came from the success of these conversations between older and younger people sharing stories about their experiences with ageism. Bringing people of all ages together to discuss their experiences with aging and ageism is an opportunity to find common ground.

Our goals for this campaign are to:

- Develop a shared understanding of ageism’s harmful effects on us at any age
- Inspire us think about why ageism exists and what we can do to address it
- Motivate people to continue talking about it, and more importantly, to identify actions to address it

This toolkit provides you with activities and guidelines for facilitating the conversations. Feel free to tailor and make them your own, and to reach out with any questions.

Thanks in advance for what you’re doing to address ageism!

Janine, Kris and Sara

Facilitation Tips (Virtual and In-Person)

Whether you are facilitating a gathering virtually or in-person, consider following these guidelines for a productive discussion.

Expectations and “priming” the conversation

Choose a topic ahead of time. See samples in **Appendix A** - feel free to make your own and add your voice.

Send your guests at least two emails: one inviting them and introducing the topic, and the second about a week ahead of time confirming the time, location and other details. In the second email, let them know you're excited to host them, and remind them to engage in the activity you've picked for the discussion, like watching a video or thinking about a question prior to the event to prime them for the conversation.

Checking in with yourself

As the facilitator, your role is to support and guide the conversation. Before leading a conversation, it can be helpful to consider your own identities, beliefs and biases around the topic. Checking in with yourself can help you prepare for facilitation, anticipate your own and your participants' potential triggers, and center yourself around the intent of the workshop. Some questions to consider:

- How might my own experiences with ageism influence how I facilitate this conversation?
- What are my own thoughts and feelings about ageism – on both ends of the age spectrum?
- How might my identities (age, gender identity, cultures, etc.) influence the dynamics of the conversation?

Setting up the space

In setting up the space for a facilitated dialogue, the most important thing is that people connect with one another.

In your home, you could have the conversation sitting around a table, or in a living room or other seating area.

In your organization or a community setting, try to avoid classroom style seating with everyone facing forward, as this formation doesn't allow all participants to easily communicate with one another. In order to set the stage for mutual collaboration, conversation and shared power, a

facilitator can sit beside participants within a circle, or at least sit at the same level as participants.

Greeting

Whether in your home, virtually, or in another setting, a great event will start with a warm greeting, introducing yourself and making sure that participants are introduced to each other and given directions about what they should do.

Start on time

A key element of a successful discussion is being respectful to the people who are there and ready to get started. So, at the start time, do go ahead and begin.

Opening activity

Our **Sample Agenda** suggests **Opening Activities** on page 11. Pick one that you feel comfortable with. We suggest starting with introductions and an opening activity. We want to draw people into the topic right away.

No elevator speeches or pitches

Conversations should be short and focused to stimulate people to think about ageism, and to do something about it. DO encourage people to introduce themselves, and where appropriate, name an organization they are affiliated with. Give them a designated time limit so there is enough time for the main conversation.

The conversation: Facilitator role

Keep in mind this definition of a what a facilitator does:

“Facilitate: to make easier, aid, assist, smooth the progress of, to make possible, create, compose.”

The word ‘facilitate’ is used in various fields to describe the process of guiding, helping, assisting, and creating. Experiential facilitation is an intentional approach to facilitation based on the idea that people learn and change more from the process of working through problems

Your role is to facilitate the conversation, ask questions, draw people out and ask people to summarize conclusions, using the Sample Agenda and questions we have provided.

Many of you are passionate about the topic (that’s why you volunteered to host)—**it’s best for facilitators to avoid dominating the conversation**, or even interjecting much. The more space the facilitator takes up in a conversation, the less space there is for all participants to explore and engage with the topic at hand. So please, let your guests be the stars of the show.

Set the tone at the outset, letting guests know that we want to hear from everyone, and that you'll be moderating the conversation to make sure everyone's voices are heard.

Welcome the group with something like the following:

"Your stories and experiences are meaningful and bring value to the group dialogue – we are here to connect and learn from each other."

Then, it is up to you as a facilitator to make sure that happens. It's alright to respectfully interrupt people if they are dominating the discussion time. You can call on people who have not had an opportunity to speak. Some helpful phrases to do this are:

- Interrupting: *"(NAME), I'm sorry to interrupt, since our time is limited, let's invite more people to share their thoughts..."*
- Getting People to Share: *"(NAME) is there anything you would like to share?"* OR *"(NAME), I notice you nodded at what (so & so) said. Would you like to add anything?"*
- You can also set the stage for a safe environment and conversation by setting out group agreements like these:
 - Listen with curiosity
 - Engage thoughtfully
 - Share your experiences
 - No personal attacks
 - No generational stereotypes

What to do if:

Someone is dominating the conversation

- Shift your gaze to make eye contact with others in the circle, providing a subtle hint to the speaker
- Interject respectfully and bring conversation back to group
- After the person is done speaking, let the group know that you would love to hear from others so multiple perspectives are shared.

Someone starts taking the group in an off topic direction

- Make a statement that summarizes their thoughts or reflect their thoughts back to them, maybe jot them down, and then move on to someone else
- Remind participants gently of the purpose of the gathering, and the limited timeframe.

Be prepared. Review the activities and questions you've selected so you're comfortable with them. Set time limits. Share with participants what to expect from the agenda and timeline. Finally, be yourself.

Extra thoughts on effective and inclusive communication

If you are new to facilitating group discussions, following are some techniques that can help people feel good about sharing and increase participation:

Mirroring - This technique allows the space for participants to ensure what they are sharing is being understood by the group and that they feel heard.

- *What I heard you say is...is that correct/accurate?*
- *Is there more?*

“I” statements - Participants can be guided to begin their statements with *“I believe”* or *“In my experience”*

Silence/Contemplation - : Allow 5+ seconds of silence after asking a question

If you’d like to dig deeper into inclusive conversations, there are additional great resources like:

- [The Four I’s of Oppression](#)
- [Navigating Difficult Conversations and Building Trust](#)

The closing

Research shows that people remember most the beginning and ending of an event. So, to make your discussion memorable, use the suggested closing or something similar in the **Sample Agenda on page 9**.

Taking notes and/or recording stories

You could ask someone to take notes to share later with the group.

Photos and sharing on social media

If you upload photos to social media, tag our account so we can share as well

- @ChangeNarrativeUS (Facebook)
- @changing-the-narrative-co (LinkedIn)
- @endageismtogether (Instagram)

Follow Changing the Narrative:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ChangeNarrativeUS>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/changing-the-narrative-co>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/endageismtogether>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@EndAgeismTogether>

Evaluations

We'd like to know whether and how these conversations shifted participants' attitudes about aging and ageism. This link is to our [Evaluation](#) and you can share it with your attendees:

Videos to Discuss

Here is a sampling of videos to prime participants for a conversation about ageism. Each addresses ageism in some way. Choose the one that would best suit your group and include a link in your email to participants, asking them to watch it before the event. The important thing is that everyone attending has watched the same video, so that it forms a basis for your conversation.

[Learning from each other to overcome ageism](#)

[Ageism Explained](#): Centre for Ageing Better, UK

[What is “old”?](#)

[Raymond Jetson on generations and societies](#)

Ashton Applewhite TED Talk: [Let’s end ageism](#)

[Why you should stop giving this compliment](#)

EveryAGE Counts: [Imagine a world without ageism](#)

Sample Agenda

Feel free to customize this to make it your own.

Time allocated	Activity	Notes
At least 15 minutes before the event begins	Preparation	Virtual - Log into your Zoom (or other meeting platform) to check your camera, mic. In-person - Arrange seating
Start event	Introductions	Virtual: Ask attendees to type their name and location into the chat. (Let attendees know they can use the chat box to ask questions). In-person: Have each person briefly introduce themselves.
Start time 15 minutes	Opening Activity	<i>Described below.</i>
2-5 minutes	Logistics and Instructions	Explain how the conversation will work, i.e., we will discuss questions I've shared; Explain ground rules if desired (typically more important in groups larger than 12 people)
50 minutes	Conversation Questions	Select no more than 3-4 questions to discuss. For each, ask the question, pause, and ask people to share thoughts.
15 minutes	Closing and call to action	Ask everyone to write down one thing they will do in the next 30 days to address ageism. Ask people to complete the evaluation.
5 minutes	Thank you and next steps	Thank everyone for participating.

Opening Activities

Generally, you don't want to spend more than 15 minutes on your opening.

The goals are to:

- Have everyone introduce themselves either to the whole group (for small gatherings) or to others they are seated with (for large gatherings)
- Build a sense of connection among each other and to the topic of ageism.

Choose an opening that you feel comfortable with. We want to draw people into the topic right away. We've provided two options below. Feel free to think of your own.

The opening is intended to get people thinking about the conversation that is about to happen.

OPTION A

"If you knew you were going to live to be 100..."

GIVE THE INSTRUCTION: Please answer this question: *If you knew you were going to live to be 100, what would you start learning or doing now?*

Virtual Event: Ask attendees to type their responses into the chat. You can read them out loud as they appear.

In-Person Event: Ask attendees to share their answer with the person sitting next to them.

After everyone has shared, state: *"Demographers predict that someone born today has a 50-50 chance of living to be 100 years old. But persistent ageism and the idea that people have an "expiration date" can stop us from learning or doing new things. Thank you for joining us for this conversation on ageism to discuss how to change ageist stereotypes and empower all of us to build on our strengths throughout our lives."*

OPTION B

Use polling questions to get things rolling.

Virtual Event: If your virtual platform allows polling, here are some suggestions for questions to create in the poll option—feel free to make your own.

In-Person Event: Feel free to state this to attendees: *"Think about the following question and statements I'm about to share, and whether any apply to you."*

1. Multiple Choice Question:

“Have you ever... “

- Lied about your age?
- Said, “I’m having a senior moment”?
- Thought, “I’m too old for that”?
- Thought, “I’m too young for that”?
- Told someone they “look good for their age”?
- Had someone say you didn’t have enough experience?
- Had someone say you were overqualified?

2. Yes/No Question:

Have you ever experienced stereotyping or discrimination because of your age?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Conversation Questions

We've grouped questions into categories, but feel free to mix and match, and to encourage people to share their experiences and stories. After each question, summarize key themes back to the group.

Stereotyping & Assumptions

Lead with: Ageism is prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination based on age. Stereotyping occurs when, instead of looking at a person as a unique individual, we assume that they have—or don't have—characteristics based on our assumptions.

1. What stereotypes or assumptions do you think people have about people your age? How might, or have, they affected you?
2. Research shows that experiencing stereotypes impacts us negatively. We internalize ageism and may stop ourselves from doing something, or trying something new. Can you share stories about how that might have happened to you, a friend, or a family member?
3. Stereotypes about age often involve whether we know enough (usually directed toward younger people), or whether we are willing to learn (usually directed toward older people). Can you share an example of something you've learned in the last year? OR Can you share something that you have learned from someone who is older or younger than you?
4. What are things we might do to address ageist stereotypes in ourselves, our workplace or communities?

CONCLUSION: Have people brainstorm a list of responses to the last question.

Internalized Ageist Beliefs

(The following prompt questions were adapted with permission from the developers of The AgeSmart Inventory@ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10088411/>)

Internalized ageist beliefs are when we have negative beliefs about ourselves based on age. We can also hold biases toward other older adults who are the same age as we are. For example, an older adult who does not want to be associated with “all of those old people.”

1. What stereotypes or assumptions do you think people have about people your age? How might, or have, the assumptions affected you?
2. Have age stereotypes impacted your choices? How? What have you done to overcome age stereotypes?
3. What ageist stories or beliefs do you have that you want to stop telling?
4. How do our beliefs about age and aging impact how we feel about ourselves?

Communication

1. How do you feel when someone says: “You look great for your age”? How did the video “Why you should stop giving this compliment” that you watched before this conversation affect your thinking?
2. What do you think of the term “ageless”? How about “anti-aging”?
3. What ageist phrases and terms have you heard that you would like people to stop using? Are there any that you use about yourself?
4. How might you respond to a person using an ageist term? How might you encourage others to respond?

CONCLUSION: Have people brainstorm a list of responses to the last question.

Intergenerational Groups

1. What have you learned from someone of another generation? What has someone from another generation learned from you?
2. Tell us about a friendship or other type of relationship you have with someone of another generation. How did you discover what you had in common?
3. The media tends to focus on the differences between generations. Do you think there are differences between generations? Who do you think benefits by pitting generations against each other?
4. What can we do to counter generational conflict themes when we see them?

CONCLUSION: Have people brainstorm a list of responses to the last question.

Isolation & Loneliness

The [US Surgeon General](#) announced that loneliness is now an epidemic impacting all ages in society. A quote from the US Surgeon General report: *"While the highest rates of social isolation are found among older adults, young adults are almost twice as likely to report feeling lonely than those over 65."*

One research study found that perceptions of discrimination based on age significantly predicted feelings of loneliness five years later (Sutin et al., 2015).

1. How do you think experiencing discrimination based on age impacts loneliness?
2. Describe ways we can all be more supportive of one another – across all ages.
3. Recent studies found that younger people are lonelier than those in later life. Does that surprise anyone here? Your thoughts?
4. What have you done in your own life to stay connected that could apply to people of any age?

CONCLUSION: Have people brainstorm a list of responses to the last question.

What's been on your mind lately?

Lead with: Recent news and world events have been dramatic as well as innovative; the pandemic, artificial intelligence, climate change, and much more...

1. What are your thoughts about the future and getting or being older?
2. What would a world without ageism look like?
3. When do you think about your age?
4. What interests do you have that people of all ages can participate in?

CONCLUSION: What are some ways we can get people to act together on important social issues?

Appendix A: Sample Emails

Email Invitation for Virtual Event

Subject line: Please join me on DATE/TIME for a virtual conversation about ageism

Text: Dear friends,

As part of Changing the Narrative 's Intergenerational Conversations campaign, I'm hosting a virtual conversation about ageism on DATE/ TIME. I'd love to have you attend!

Why am I doing this? Ageism—the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age—is pervasive! It can be directed at younger people and older people. Either way, it reduces opportunities and diminishes us all.

The good news: Research shows that education and intergenerational connection are effective in reducing ageism. When we come together to share our perspectives, people's attitudes about age shift. Collectively, we can all participate in changing our biases and reducing ageism.

HERE, IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN ADD A SENTENCE ABOUT WHY YOU CARE ABOUT THE ISSUE OF AGEISM.

So, let's get together and talk—about ageism, about how it affects us and our communities, and what we can do about it.

I promise you it will be lively and fun! Let me know if you can attend by emailing or calling me at XXX.

I hope you can attend!

Email Invitation for In-Person Event

Subject line: Please join me on DATE/TIME for an in-person conversation about ageism

Text: Dear friends,

As part of Changing the Narrative 's Intergenerational Conversations campaign, I'm hosting an in-person conversation about ageism on DATE/ TIME at LOCATION ADDRESS.

I'd love to have you attend!

Why am I doing this? Ageism—the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age—is pervasive! It can be directed at younger people and older people. Either way, it reduces opportunities and diminishes us all.

The good news: Research shows that education and intergenerational connection are effective in reducing ageism. When we come together to share our perspectives, people’s attitudes about age shift. Collectively, we can all participate in changing our biases and reducing ageism.

HERE, IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN ADD A SENTENCE ABOUT WHY YOU CARE ABOUT THE ISSUE OF AGEISM.

So, let’s get together and talk—about ageism, about how it affects us and our communities, and what we can do about it.

I promise you it will be lively and fun!

Let me know if you can come by emailing or calling me at XXX. I hope you can attend!

Email Invitation for Organizations

Subject line: You’re invited to an intergenerational conversation about ageism

Text: NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION is hosting a conversation about ageism on DATE/TIME at ADD LOCATION ADDRESS or ADD VIRTUALLY.

Why are we doing this? Ageism—the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age—is pervasive! It can be directed at younger people and older people. Either way, it reduces opportunities and diminishes us all.

The good news: Research shows that education and intergenerational connection are effective in reducing ageism. When we come together to share our perspectives, people’s attitudes about age shift. Collectively, we can all participate in changing our biases and reducing ageism.

IF DESIRED, ADD YOUR OWN SENTENCE ABOUT WHY THIS TOPIC IS IMPORTANT TO YOU/YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Want to participate? It’s easy—just register for this free event at the link below.

ADD REGISTRATION LINK (if virtual), or ADD LOCATION ADDRESS (if in-person)

Thank you so much and we look forward to seeing you on DATE.

Your signature

BELOW YOUR SIGNATURE, ADD:

Changing the Narrative is a campaign of NextFifty Initiative to end ageism. You can read more about our work at: [Changing the Narrative](#)

Confirmation email ahead of event:

Note: You can send this out about 5-7 days before your event

VIRTUAL EVENT:

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are so excited to see you on DATE/TIME to talk about the important topic of ageism and how it affects us all.

To get us ready for the conversation, I ask that you watch the following video before the event. It will only take a few minutes of your time, and we'll be discussing the themes that come up.

HERE, ADD THE LINK TO ONE OF THE VIDEOS OR TYPE IN ONE OF THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO INCLUDE THE VIDEO LINK MENTIONED ABOVE

Do log in on time, we will be starting promptly at START TIME.

Thanks so much, and can't wait to see you!

Name

IN-PERSON EVENT:

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are so excited to see you on DATE/TIME, at ADD LOCATION to talk about the important topic of ageism and how it affects us all.

To get us ready for the conversation, I ask that you watch the following before the event. It will only take a few minutes of your time, and we'll be discussing the themes that come up.

HERE, ADD THE LINK TO ONE OF THE VIDEOS OR TYPE IN ONE OF THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO INCLUDE THE VIDEO LINK MENTIONED ABOVE

Please be on time, we will be starting promptly at START TIME.

Thanks so much, and can't wait to see you!

Name

Appendix B: Additional Tools and Resources

[Changing the Narrative's Resource Page](#)

[Changing the Narrative's PBS Series](#)

[Ageism Quiz](#) from EveryAGE Counts (Australia)

If you'd like to dig deeper into inclusive conversations, there are additional great resources like:

- [The Four I's of Oppression](#)
- [Navigating Difficult Conversations and Building Trust](#)

Organizations focused on Intergenerational Work

This list is meant to expand, if you know of organizations please let us know and we can add them.

[CoGenerate](#) - Envisions a world where older and younger people join forces to solve problems, bridge divides and co-create the future.

[Generations United](#) - The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

[Generations Over Dinner](#) - This global initiative aims to create meaningful multi-generational experiences and conversations that help reverse a culture of ageism

[LinkAGES](#) (Colorado) - Making intergenerational programming the norm by building capacity, facilitating collaboration and raising awareness of the power of intergenerational connections.

[For All Ages](#) (Connecticut) - For All Ages is dedicated to connecting the generations and inspiring action to end loneliness, reduce ageism, and improve mental, physical, and social health.