



Commission on

**Aging & Disability**

# Ageism and Ableism

Leaving No One Behind



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## Today's Objectives:

1. Define and differentiate between ageism and ableism
2. Understand the impact of ageism and ableism on society
3. Learn at least one way to re-frame the conversation around aging and ableism



**Why do we  
put people  
into groups?**



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# Understanding Ageism

# The Last Acceptable “ism”



**Ageism**: Negative or positive stereotyping, prejudice, and/or discrimination against older adults based on chronological age or perceiving them as being “old” or “older”

Iversen TN, Larsen L, Solem PE. A Conceptual Analysis of Ageism. Nord Psychology 2009



# Another Point of View



**Ageism**: prejudice by one age group toward other age groups

Butler, RN (1969). Age-ism: Another Form of Bigotry. *The Gerontologist*, 9, 243-246

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# Ageism Everywhere

- Greeting cards
- 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School Activities
- In a Healthcare Setting
- In the Workplace
- In the Media
- In our Culture



# Ageist Language

- Elderly
- Old
- Geezer
- Boomer
- Over the hill
- Senile
- Kiddo
- Seniors
- Silver Tsunami
- Aged



# Impact of Ageism

- Reduced Self-Esteem
- Self-imposed Isolation
- Limited Opportunities
- Devaluation of the work of Caregivers
- Intersectionality with other forms of Discrimination
- Lack of Diverse Perspectives
- Loss of Valuable Contributions
- Economic Implications
- Poor policies
- Shorter lifespan
- Disregard for life



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# Understanding Ableism

# Ableism

- Ableism: prejudice and discrimination aimed at disabled people, often with a patronizing desire to “cure” their disability and make them “normal”; portrays individuals who are being defined by their disabilities as inherently inferior to nondisabled people.



# Types of Ableism

- Employment, housing and other institutional discrimination
- Lack of accessibility on streets, buildings and public transportation
- Stereotyping and ableist language, lack of media portrayals or stereotyped depictions of people with disabilities
- Bullying
- Low expectations, isolation and pity

# Factors That Characterize/Contribute To

- Anxiety in unstructured social encounters
- Social and cultural conditioning
- Familiar responses toward minorities
- Fear of death thoughts
- Gender and personality factors
- Hierarchical attitudes toward disability
- Incorrect and offensive moral beliefs about disability
- Various other disability –related factors

# Examples of Ableism

- Asking someone what is “wrong” with them
- Saying “You do not look disabled,” as though it is a compliment
- Viewing a person with a disability as inspirational for doing typical things
- Assuming physical disability is a product of laziness or lack of exercise
- Using public facilities that are for people with disabilities, such as parking spaces or toilets



# Ableist Language

- Words and phrases based on physical disabilities, neurodivergence

## Instead of Saying:

Dumb  
Crazy  
I'm so OCD  
I'm obsessed with  
Lame  
Blind leading the blind  
Falling on deaf ears

## Say This:

Ignorant, Dense  
Bizarre, Outrageous  
I'm particular  
I'm enamored with  
Boring, Unexciting  
Unknowledgeable  
You didn't hear me

# Impact of Ableism

- Depression/anxiety
- Self-Isolation
- Reduced social interaction
- Lack of diverse culture
- Prevention of reaching full potential
- Not receiving adequate treatment
- Not being taken seriously
- Disregard for life



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**Changing our Words and  
Behaviors**

# Culture Change Begins With You

- Educate yourself on aging and disability
- Learn about ageism and ableism in all its' forms
- Recognize your own biases
- Slow down and think
- Listen to others share their experiences
- Challenge ageism and ableism when you hear/see it
- Don't speak for others
- Advocate for inclusivity
- Give yourself grace

# Sources

- Disability Etiquette - United Spinal Association
- Ableism: Types, examples, impact, and anti-ableism (medicalnewstoday.com)
- Iversen, T. N., Larsen, L., & Solem, P. E. (2009). A conceptual analysis of ageism. *Nordic Psychology*, 61(3), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1901-2276.61.3.4>
- Langmann, Elisabeth & Weßel, Merle. (2023). Leaving no one behind: successful ageing at the intersection of ageism and ableism. *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine*. 18. 10.1186/s13010-023-00150-8.
- Dunn, D. S. (2021, December 15). *Understanding ableism and negative reactions to disability*. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/ableism-negative-reactions-disability>

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