

# **Stop Ageism Now**

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***



### **1. What is “ageism”?**

“Ageism” is the systematic discrimination against older people, coined by Dr. Robert Butler in 1968. It can take many forms, but at its core ageism is the act of making judgments about others solely on the basis of how old they are.

### **2. Why is the Agency on Aging trying to fight aging?**

We aren’t—we believe that aging and getting old are important and inevitable stages of life! We are fighting ageISM in order to ensure that as our clients (and ourselves!) age, we continue to be treated with the same matter of respect we always have.

### **3. I know we shouldn’t discriminate, but doesn’t everyone want to stay young and healthy as long as possible?**

We all want to stay as healthy as possible! The problem comes when we equate that with the idea of being young. While age is one factor in how healthy you may be, it is far from the most important. Every day you are apt to run into someone in their 70s taking her morning jog or a teenager who is on his fifth cold of the season.

### **4. Is ageism really as big of a problem as racism or sexism in this country?**

Fighting ageism does not mean you can’t also fight against racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination – in fact, these issues often compound one-another.

### **5. How can I stop myself from having a negative attitude towards aging?**

First, it’s important to recognize that you are completely normal. In our culture it’s easy to buy into negative stereotypes of older adults. Here are some tips to change your worldview:

- Educate yourself – [StopAgeismNow.org](http://StopAgeismNow.org) has many links that tell the true story of aging and address common misconceptions (we particularly like [“Yo, Is This Ageist”](#) to see Ashton Applewhite challenge stereotypes that are all around us—and that you may have missed.)
- Be aware and think twice before you make a comment about an older person – is this something that you would say about her if she were in her 20s or 30s?
- Read more **positive** articles about aging. Recent studies led by Yale’s Dr. Becca Levy have shown that you can counter the negative cultural messages you receive by spending time reading and thinking about what a great stage of life being old really is.

## 6. What can I do if I see someone else acting “ageist”?

It can be hard to know the right thing to say when you encounter someone saying something offensive or ageist. Here are some tips to help you out:

- Educate yourself and be prepared with a list of counter-answers! If you hear someone talking about how all older adults do is sit around and take up space, there is nothing more powerful than being able to say that, in fact, *almost half of people over 55 volunteer regularly!*
- Don’t be afraid to “name it.” While it’s usually not effective to accuse a person of being “ageist,” it is extremely valuable to challenge *ideas* as ageist. Saying the word “ageist” out loud is probably the number one thing you can do to help fight ageism, simply by raising awareness of the issue!
- [Share your story](#)— on [StopAgeismNow.org](http://StopAgeismNow.org) we want to hear about your experiences.

## 7. How can I help?

- Start the conversation – from your church to your civic meetings to your family table, it’s important that we all start working to raise awareness of this issue.
- Get your button—visit us at the Agency on Aging’s offices on One Long Wharf Drive to pick up a [StopAgeismNow.org](http://StopAgeismNow.org) button for free!
- Contact your legislators—it’s important to tell the people you voted for what you want to see happen in our communities and beyond.
- Sign-up to receive information from [StopAgeismNow.org](http://StopAgeismNow.org).