

Know Ageism.

New friendships help us connect with people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures. These connections give us new ways of looking at our world, which can help dispel timeworn myths and stereotypes. For older adults who are experiencing isolation and loneliness, friendships can provide even more benefits, such as improved mental and physical health. Sometimes when we enter into new friendships, though, we bring along our own stereotypes and assumptions. Knowing and identifying ageism can help you better connect and engage with your older neighbors.

Ageism is defined as stereotyping and discrimination based on age (in this resource we focus on older adults). Ageism can take the form of individual or institutional attitudes, practices or policies. Negative attitudes toward aging can affect the physical and mental health of older adults — from increased cardiovascular stress to reduced self-efficacy and shortened life expectancy — and can also promote stereotypes, such as social isolation, cognitive decline and physical fragility. Ageism can also reduce older adults' ability and willingness to access healthy aging services.

More positive attitudes about aging can translate to a larger and more diverse aging services workforce, which can better support our older neighbors. Help Texas counter outdated concepts of aging. Be proactive. Reach out to your neighbors and form connections that will span generations. The [HHS Know Your Neighbor campaign](#) urges Texans to safely reach out and connect with older neighbors and provides tools and resources to help make those connections. Explore your current aging-related attitudes using the guided activity below.

Self-Reflection Activity

1. What comes to mind when you think of aging? Are there any attributes that you associate with older adults? Note whether your responses are mostly positive or negative.
2. What has influenced your perspective on aging? Consider the source and why these messages have become ingrained. Perhaps it was from a trusted source, or the message was repeated over time.
3. What can you do to assess these types of messages about aging and older adults in the future?



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Resources

Harvard University's Implicit Bias Test
implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html

LeadingAge Ageism Resources
leadingage.org/ageism-resources-0

FrameWorks Institute's Gaining Momentum Communications Toolkit
frameworksinstitute.org/toolkit/gaining-momentum

Old School Anti-Ageism Clearinghouse
oldschool.info

Texas Workforce Commission Age Discrimination Webpage
www.twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/age-discrimination

Office of the Texas Governor Aging Texans Webpage
gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities/aging_texans

References

1. World Health Organization. (Nov. 2, 2020). Ageing: Ageism.
who.int/westernpacific/news/q-a-detail/ageing-ageism