AGEISM AWARENESS DAY

SAMPLE ARTICLE

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Ageism is alive and well in our society. It persists because we don't often recognize it or respond to it. We learn from an early age to see aging as decline and something to be avoided. We readily apply that view to others — but also to ourselves.

The result of this harmful stereotype is dread and fear of growing old. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Research shows that people who have a negative view of growing older actually live 7.5 fewer years than their peers, a tragic human cost.

Unchecked, this negative idea about age gets reinforced in media, TV, movies, comedy, and other contexts. Advertisers often ignore or misrepresent older adults. When they do show up, older people are often portrayed as "super-agers" or for comic effect.

Ageism in healthcare decisions can result in less effective care, denial of treatment, or misdiagnosis. Internalized beliefs about ageism can make people vulnerable to stress, anxiety, depression and social isolation, which often go untreated.

In the workplace, older workers are often denied professional development opportunities that would maintain their qualifications. In layoffs, they are typically the first to go and the last to be hired back.

Those who are laid off or forced into early retirement before they are ready rarely regain their earning power. They face longer periods of unemployment and often take lower paying or part-time jobs out of necessity.

But older workers possess skills in high demand, like problem solving, empathy, judgment and emotional control. Productivity, innovation, stability and profitability all improve significantly when older workers are included in work teams.

Declining birthrates and longer lives are changing the labor force. Older workers now make up 25% of the labor force, up from 12% in 1994. And that trend will continue. In fact, older workers are the only workforce segment that is growing.

October 9 is Ageism Awareness Day, sponsored in the US by the American Society on Aging. It offers the opportunity to call attention to the impact of ageism in our society, a first step toward change. Find more info at https://asaging.org/ageism-awareness.

The Encore Network is a coalition of leaders who champion the civic, social and economic contributions of people over 50. Find more info at https://encorenetwork.org.