Creating Intergenerational Allies to Combat Ageism

GUIDE TO FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS, BUILDING TRUST & INSPIRING ACTION

THE ENCORE NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

Two-thirds of older people say they experience ageism at work. But that doesn't happen only to older workers.

- ✓ According to one study, a third of younger people say they experience ageism in the workplace.
- ✓ Mid-career workers say they are often passed over for promotions and training opportunities.

Ageism occurs across the lifespan. So what if we could unite our efforts with the efforts of other age groups, working together to end ageism for all.

This Guide is designed to help you take steps to bring people together to achieve that goal.

What is ageism?

The stereotypes **(how we think)**, prejudice **(how we feel)**, and discrimination **(how we act)** toward others or ourselves based on age.

World Health Organization

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OUR GOALS

1. **CONNECT** people of different ages for a meaningful conversation.
2. **SHARE** experiences of ageist thinking, feeling & actions.
3. **LEARN** about the impact of these experiences on people, society, organizations & the economy.
4. **BUILD** understanding, empathy and trusting relationships.
5. **DECIDE** how to work together to combat ageism and take action.

Thanks

We appreciate the inspiration, collaboration, content & support for this initiative and this Guide from Generations Over Dinner & Changing the Narrative.

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GETTING STARTED

- **SELECT** a format – in-person or virtual, food or not, time of day
- **PICK** a place – home, coffee shop, library, office, community room, etc.
- **PLAN** the conversation – breaking the ice, topics for discussion, any- thing to pre-read, call to action
- **INVITE** participants – co-workers, family, friends, colleagues or others – of different ages and experiences
- **SEND** invitations – let people know what to expect and how to prepare

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PLANNING THE CONVERSATION

WELCOME (getting people in place and ready to begin – 5 minutes)

ICE BREAKERS (getting things started - 15 minutes)

Times based on a 90-minute format

- ✓ Ask people to briefly introduce themselves: name & one thing about themselves.
- ✓ Ask: Have you ever thought "I'm too old/young for that?" Give brief example.
- ✓ Ask: Have you ever been told "You're too old/young for that?" Give brief example.

GROUND RULES (setting expectations - 5 minutes)

- ➢ Listen with curiosity & respect
- ➢ Share your experiences openly
- ➢ Be inclusive – allow others to speak if you've already spoken
- ➢ No judgments – "Yes, and" not "No, but"
- ➢ Avoid generational stereotypes & labels unless they're important to your story
- ➢ Respect the time and stay on topic

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PLANNING THE CONVERSATION, continued

PROMPTS (to get the conversation started – 50 minutes)

- What are some common assumptions or beliefs about people your age? Have they affected you or someone you know? Can you share an example?
- Sometimes we internalize what others say or think about us. Have you ever stopped yourself from doing something because you believed you were too young or too old, or it wasn't appropriate for your age? Can you share an example?
- Research shows that mixed-age groups get better results. Can you share something you learned by working alongside someone older or younger than you?
- What are some things we might do together or as individuals to end ageism?

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PLANNING THE CONVERSATION, continued

PREPARATION (inviting participants to do some homework & advance thinking)

VIDEO RESOURCES

- How Old is Old? – video from AARP
- Learning from each other to overcome ageism
- Let's end ageism – Ashton Applewhite TED Talk

READING RESOURCES

- The Future of Aging is Intergenerational
- Exploring the Health Effects of Ageism
- Is 'Youngism' the New Ageism?

Pro Tip

Select one resource and ask participants to view or read it in advance. Ask them to share their reaction to the video or article as an Ice Breaker.

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PLANNING THE CONVERSATION, continued

CALL TO ACTION (thinking about next steps – 15 minutes)

- ✓ What did you learn about yourself or ageism that you want to share?
- ✓ What will you do as an individual to end ageist thoughts, feelings & actions?
- ✓ What can we do together to change ageist thoughts, feelings & actions?
- ✓ What next steps will we take to make that happen?

CLOSING (bringing the conversation to an end – 5 minutes)

- Clarify next steps and who will take the lead for each
- Express appreciation for participation, sharing & ideas
- Take photo if there is interest in sharing on social media

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SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

- **AGE** – include people of different age groups to ensure that intergenerational perspectives are shared.
- **MIX** – connecting people who don't all know each other will create a more open discussion and more opportunities to learn from others' experiences.
- **FIT** – learn a little about invitees in advance so you know they will feel comfortable about discussing this topic in the group.

Pro Tip

Consider partnering with another person or group to help you find participants that will round out the age, mix or fit of your invitees.

Pro Tip

Think about group size: too few means less varied input; too many means less time to share. A range of 8 - 15 may be ideal.

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SENDING AN INVITATION

SAMPLE EMAIL (feel free to customize and add more specific info about your event)

Subject: Please join me on DATE/TIME/PLACE for a conversation about ageism.

Ageism is a problem in our society. It can be directed at younger and older people. Either way, it reduces opportunities and diminishes us all. But what can we do about it?

In this conversation, we'll talk about our experiences with ageism and how it affects people of different ages. We'll also discuss actions we can take individually and as a group to help end the impact of ageism for everyone.

So let's get together for a conversation about how we can remove age-related barriers and advance opportunities for people of all ages.

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BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

SEND A REMINDER EMAIL – Include date, starting and ending time, place, online meeting link if virtual, pre-work if using, your enthusiasm about their participation.

PREPARE THE MEETING PLACE – If meeting in person, arrange the space to facilitate conversation, ideally chairs in a circle or around a table, so everyone can see others.

FOOD – If serving food, beverages or refreshments, allow additional time in your agenda for serving and eating. Try to make food easily accessible to avoid disruptions.

PREPARE YOURSELF – As the facilitator, you will greet and welcome participants, make them feel comfortable, manage the conversation, and help people find their part in moving this conversation forward, including action of some sort.

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MANAGING THE CONVERSATION

KEEP IT MANAGEABLE - Find a format that is comfortable for you. Feel free to customize to fit your time and personal preferences.

MAKE IT WELCOMING - This is a serious topic but it can be fun and informal too. Keeping interactions warm and supportive will encourage sharing & trust-building.

MAKE IT PERSONAL - Ensure that everyone is included and no one is left out of the conversation. Validate the value of the experiences shared by everyone.

KEEP IT RELEVANT - Bring digressions back to the question at hand. Help lead the conversation to constructive ideas about what we can all do about ageism.

MAKE IT BETTER - Think about what you might do differently next time and share it with The Encore Network – and use it to plan your next conversation.

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BUILDING TRUST

CREATE A SAFE SPACE – From the initial welcome and throughout the conversation, make sure that people feel comfortable sharing their experiences, observations & ideas. Include everyone, listen with empathy, and avoid judgments or criticisms.

VALIDATE VIEWPOINTS – Acknowledge the contributions each participant is making to the conversation and connect them to the overall theme.

ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION – Link observations & suggestions in a way that makes it easy for participants to recognize the value of working together to get a result.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY – Set clear expectations for the conversation, maintain focus and stay on track. People respond to confident leadership and mutual respect.

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POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

WRITE an article or opinion piece for your local newspaper or other media outlet.*

DEVELOP a social media campaign to make your followers aware of ageism.*

PLAN another conversation and encourage others to join you in spreading the word.**

HOLD a 'lunch & learn' (or similar event) at your office or organization to discuss ways that ageism affects different age groups in the workplace.**

SUGGEST that your work teams include people of different ages to gain the benefit of increased productivity and innovation.

TAKE the opportunity to explain why ageist jokes, phrases & labels can be hurtful.

*See Ageism Awareness Toolkit in Resources **Use this Guide to plan

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AFTER THE CONVERSATION

SEND A THANK YOU NOTE – Thank your participants for their contribution to the conversation. Summarize key points and remind them of commitments.

ORGANIZE FOLLOW-UP – If the group committed to collaborating on a joint project or an individual follow-up action, make sure everyone knows their part and next steps.

SUMMARIZE & EVALUATE – Let us know how the conversation went, what insights the group reached, and what they committed to do following the meeting.

PLAN YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION – If you feel good about this experience, consider doing another one. Ending ageism is an ongoing process and will take place over the course of many conversations.

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RESOURCES

TOOLKITS

- Ageism Awareness Toolkit from The Encore Network
- Global Campaign to Combat Ageism from the World Health Organization

BOOKS

- This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism by Ashton Applewhite
- Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias & How to End It by Tracey Gendron

VIDEOS

- Embrace Age with a Longevity Mindset by Helen Hirsh Spence
- Are Young People Discriminated Against for Being Young? from the BBC

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RESOURCES (continued)

ORGANIZATIONS

- Generations Over Dinner
- CoGenerate
- Generations United

INITIATIVES

- Feeling Lonely? Try Connecting with a Kid from AARP
- The Intergenerational ERG: A Key to Fostering Age Inclusion from AARP
- The Importance of Age Inclusion in the Workforce from AARP
- Bridging Generational Divides in Your Workplace from Harvard Business Review

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