

Anti-Ageism Community Training Companion Discussion Guide

First, thank you for being an informal ambassador for Anti-Ageism! Together, we can work to change the culture around aging and growing older.



Background & Purpose

Group debrief sessions help cement learnings and provide an opportunity to brainstorm with others about how to incorporate anti-ageist practices at work and in personal lives. Conversations can happen with any group—volunteers, colleagues, neighbors—and be led by anyone who wants to encourage others to think more deeply about ageism and the needs of older adults. In our experience, a loosely structured conversation can help groups come up with their own insights and ideas. Age Friendly Seattle has created this guide to help you host your own discussion.

Sessions are typically scheduled with the expectation that participants have already watched the training—realistically, however, it is wise to approach the conversation as if some people have not had a chance yet to do so.

Debriefs usually last 45-60 minutes, depending on group size. The tone is generally informal, with a sensitivity that we are all in different places on our aging journey. For some, this is a new concept to explore while others may have immediate experience with the harms of ageism. We aim to make all people feel comfortable while reflecting on their personal and professional experiences with this topic.

Planning a successful experience

- **Invitation**—Use the sample email (below) to send to your group—it includes a link to the training and invites people to watch in anticipation of a discussion.
- **Scheduling**—set aside time during a regularly scheduled gathering, or set up something specific. Reminders to try to watch the training in advance do help! Virtual discussions can work well, allowing for interactive use of chat feature.
- **Preparation support**—read through the tips and guidance, but feel free to make it your own and prioritize certain questions you think will resonate most with your group. Recruit a friend/coworker to help!
- **Shared participation**—ask participants to share, anticipate silence/pauses as part of the process, and invite those who haven't shared yet to contribute. Breathe!

Sample Discussion Guide *(45-minute group discussion)*

- **Intro to Aging and Ageism** (5 mins) *(Use the prompts below, or this is a great place to share your own story of why you think this topic is important!)*

Expectations for today's discussion:

- We are all WHOLE beings, and we bring our personal selves into our work and everyday interactions with others—including any biases we hold.
 - Want to acknowledge—not 'us & them', older people vs. everyone else. We are ALL aging & we all share this one thing—aging!
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- **Ice-breaker Question** (5 mins): Is there a time in your life—or multiple times—when you felt old? What made you feel that way?
 - *Often themes come up around eligibility (“when I could get a senior discount at the movies), or external signaling (“when I got my AARP card!” or “when people started calling me ‘ma’am’ instead of ‘miss’), or physical changes (“when I realized I couldn’t hike the way I used to”), or some unspoken social code (“when I turned 80”). Help the group tease out these themes and set the tone that we are all somewhere on this journey, and getting a lot of messages from many different sources about what “old” is.*
 - **Group Discussion Questions** (35 mins)
 - *We often start with more personal questions, and then move the group toward a conversation about how to incorporate learnings into professional roles. Feel free to let the conversation meander, skip questions, rearrange the order, or add your own!*
 1. Had you ever thought about ageism before this training? Did the training help you consider older adults and aging in a new light?
 2. Did you have any powerful learning moments? What made them so?
 3. What would you say is the most important thing you took away from this training, on a personal level?
 4. What is one thing you wish that your family or friends would also learn?
 5. When it comes to your work/team/group, did this training give you anything new to think about?
 6. What do you feel most gets in the way of creating an age-friendly city? Is this something you can impact?
 7. What are you working on right now? Is there a way to apply an aging lens to this?
 8. What other colleagues or networks do you think could benefit from this training, and what is it that you wish they could learn?

9. What else do you wish you knew about aging or older adults?
10. How will you use what you've learned in the future? What might you do differently, or more of? Feel free to share examples from your work and/or personal life.

Thank you & Conclusion—thank everyone for their contributions and refer back to the training & resources to learn more. Invite to look out for instances of ageism in daily life!

- **Resources for further learning**—Find extensive resources included within the body of the training, including a recommended list of YouTube videos, books, articles, etc. to facilitate a deeper dive into this topic. Also, a consolidated resources list is included at the end of this Guide, if you want to share out as a handout.

Appendix (in following pages):

- **Sample email** (use/adapt to schedule & start your group's conversation around aging!)
- **Suggested resources**—includes videos, books, articles, etc. to deepen your study and continue learning.
- **Self-Reflection Guide**—print out and follow the prompts (structured to match same order) as you watch the training, to encourage deeper thinking and personal reflection around this topic.
- **Become an official Anti-Ageism Ambassador**—want to join others who are working to change mindsets about aging, one conversation at a time? We are recruiting ambassadors of all ages to join us in finding new audiences to have these conversations. Reach out and get involved!
- **Contact us**—we'd love to hear from you about your and/or your group's experience with the training and discussion! Reach out at: agefriendly@seattle.gov

Sample email (use & adapt to start a group conversation around aging!):

Hi _____, Age Friendly Seattle has launched an online training called ‘We HEART Aging: Anti-Ageism Training’ available to anyone. Personally, I thought it was important to pause and think about how we think about aging, and how it might affect our work with _____(insert your why/shared goals here).

In this training you’ll hear from fellow Seattle-area residents as they share their own, or a loved one’s, personal story of aging. You’ll learn more about:

- *Why—and how—ageism hurts us all.*
- *Explore how changing our own mindset around aging can extend our lives (really!).*
- *Gain practical tips for becoming anti-ageist.*

I felt this topic was important enough that I’ve scheduled time for us to discuss shared insights on _____(date&time). It’s recommended to watch the training in advance of our discussion, but not necessary: <https://www.seattle.gov/agefriendly/programs/anti-ageism-training>. I look forward to diving into this topic with you!

From, _____(insert your name here)

Suggested Resources by Topic

We ❤️ Aging: Anti-Ageism Training



Topic	Title	Type	Resource
<i>Aging & Ageism:</i>			
Ageism	'The Harmful Effects of Ageism' , how false narratives can affect young and old alike	Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=np3T4Yzaws
Ageism	Breaking the Age Code: How Your Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long & Well You Live , by Dr. Becca Levy	Book	www.becca-levy.com
Bias	Harvard's Implicit Bias Test , measures strength of associations between concepts, judgements, or stereotypes—how do we measure up?	Self-Assessment	https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
<i>Communication & Advocacy:</i>			
Ageism/Ableism	'Ageist? Ableist? Who, Me?'	Article	https://generations.asaging.org/ageist-ableist-who-me
Communication	'Why Words Matter' , article in AgeWise King County	Article	https://www.agewisekingcounty.org/il_pubs_articles/why-words-matter/
Communication	Changing The Narrative: Guidelines for Age-Inclusive Communication	Tips Sheet	https://changingthenarrativeco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-Age-Inclusive-Communications_ChangingtheNarrative-1.pdf
Ageism	'Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End It' , book by Dr. Tracey Gendron	Book	www.TraceyGendron.com
Ageism	'Let's End Ageism' TED Talk	Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfjzkO6_DEI
<i>Taking Action:</i>			
Communication	The FrameWorks Institute , applying social science to study how people understand social issues like aging	Website	https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/aging/

Employment	'Age Is Now A Strategic Imperative': An Employer's Guide to Engaging Older Workers	Resource Guide	https://encorenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/edd/2023/05/Age-Friendly-Employers-Guide-final.pdf
Aging	Reframing Aging , a central hub for the movement to reframe aging	Website	https://www.reframingaging.org/Resources/Useful-Tools
Implementing Ideas	National Institutes of Health (NIH): Social Determinants of Health and Older Adults	Scenarios/ Webpage	https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/healthy-aging/social-determinants-health-and-older-adults
<i>Courageous Conversations:</i>			
Tools	"Who me, ageist?": How to start a consciousness-raising group	Script	https://thischairrocks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ConsciousnessRaisingBooklet.pdf
Tools	Ageism Awareness: images and content to bring awareness	Resources	https://www.allbetter.art/collections/ageism-awareness

Brought to you by: Age Friendly Seattle | seattle.gov/agefriendly | agefriendly@seattle.gov



We HEART Aging – Self Reflection Guide

Developed for you by Age Friendly Seattle

(for use with Anti-Ageism Training, at: <https://seattle.gov/agefriendly/programs/anti-ageism-training>)

Welcome to your Age Friendly Self Reflection Guide. This guide is meant to:

- enhance your learning by prompting you to assess your experiences, actions, and beliefs regarding aging.
- foster deeper understanding, identify strengths and areas that you can adapt or challenge your thinking.
- encourage guided introspection, and self- reflection activities to cultivate self-awareness, adaptability, and critical thinking toward age friendly practices.
- aid in continuous growth and empower you to think about adopting healthy practices, and foster positivity toward your own aging journey.

1. 5 Words or Phrases

Jot down 5 words or phrases that come to mind when you think about aging or getting older.

What are they? Add your initial words and phrases in the space provided.

My Words and phrases:

2. Stories about Aging: Voices of Older Adults

Throughout this module you'll hear many stories from the community of Seattle. Those stories include:

Kai's Story: *"I am fast approaching the Kupuna ranks myself and have family and friends throughout age-group categories, and it gives me hope that by paddling together, sharing food and story together, and working side-by-side to keep our culture alive, we will teach our young people and our fellow adults how to see their aging journey as part of a whole."*

Torrence's Story: *"I currently work and am frequently asked "When are you going to retire?" I feel defensive at times, and sometimes I say, "Why, do I look like I need to retire?"."*

Ava's Story: *"I was experiencing balance issues and struggled with using a walker when out and about, because I don't want to look or feel like 'a little old lady'. I started getting out less and less because of this combination of factors...until a friend suggested a creative solution—my 'flamingo legs'!"*

Lisa's Story: *"My upstairs neighbor and I hit it off right away when I moved in almost a decade ago, and we've been friends ever since. She introduced me to tons of other neighbors and tells amazing stories. We have forty years between us, but we share political leanings, musical taste, and an interest in local art...She has made me feel like my roots in Seattle are deeper."*

Imani's Story: *"We often do not know what internal strengths we have until we face mountains of uncertainty. I know what I experienced helped me to become a stronger person, a more compassionate advocate, and a champion for all of those who face catastrophic situations."*

Diane's Story: *"When I turned 56, I suddenly became a caregiver for my husband, who had just been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. I didn't know a single thing about providing care for someone with dementia. Really, I didn't know anything at all about dementia. I felt absolutely overwhelmed with the enormity of setting up a safe environment at home for Michael and continuing to work outside the house."*

Voices of Older Adults

When we introduced these stories, we asked that you:

- Pay attention to whether these stories confirm or challenge stereotypes
- Highlight ageism's harmful impacts
- Reflect joys or challenges of aging

As you reflect on these stories and themes, think about responding to the following questions:

How did these stories impact your perspective on aging?

What messages particularly resonated with you?

What opportunities do you see to create a community that supports aging with disabilities, memory loss and aging in general?

3. Aging and Older Adults

In your opinion, how might your own life experiences impact your aging journey?

4. Ageism in Action Video

Reflect on your thoughts and feelings as you watched the **food truck video**, below. Did you relate to anyone's reaction in particular?

5. Definition & Impact of Ageism

Definition: Referring to the stereotypes (**how we think**), prejudices (**how we feel**), and discrimination (**how we act**) **towards others—or oneself—based on age.** (World Health Organization (WHO))

Impact: Ageism affects our longevity. Older individuals with **more positive self-perceptions of aging live** _____ (*fill in the blank*) **years longer** than those with less positive self-perceptions of aging. (Becca Levy, Yale University)

What other impacts did you learn about that suggest thinking more broadly about this issue?

6. Intersecting “isms”

How might various “isms” combine with ageism and impact someone's economic security, their social connections, or even their health? Might any impact you personally?

7. Bias and Ageism

Look at the following image. What are the first words that come to mind as you look at this image?



8. **5 Words or Phrases** (round 2)

When you first started, you were asked to jot down 5 words or phrases that came to mind when you thought about aging or getting older. Later in the module, you were asked if you would change any of them. Did you?

Capture your new words and phrases in the space provided. My New Words and phrases:

9. **Cultural Views of Aging**

Growing up, the messages I got about aging were:

I received these messages...where? (*at home, at school, TV, online, public spaces, etc.*):

Is this a positive or negative way to think about aging?

How might this have influenced how you feel about your own or others' aging now?

10. Acting on Ageism – Building Your Personal Awareness Plan
Insights

What are the three (3) most powerful things you learned about aging or ageism in this module?

1.

2.

3.

Strategies

Give three (3) examples of **ways you can personally contribute to an age-inclusive community.**
Be specific:

What:

When

Where

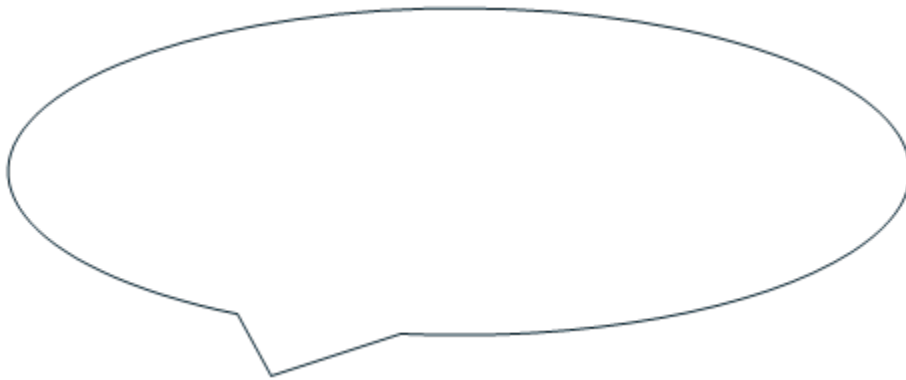
How

11. New thoughts

Create a hashtag (that is, a slogan or phrase) which summarizes your **new** perspective on aging and the aging continuum.

Think about some catchphrase that might inspire you, or a call to action...

Write it in the thought bubble, below:



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Thank you for participating in this anti-ageism training & discussion. We view any follow-up conversations as an essential part of the training! Please consider sharing the training link with friends & family (see link below or by scanning the QR code), to continue our collective learning and growing:
seattle.gov/agefriendly/programs/anti-ageism-training



*If you'd like to **join us in becoming an Anti-Ageism Ambassador**, and help raise awareness within your sphere of influence, or if you have suggestions—we'd love to hear from you. Reach out and get involved at: agefriendly@seattle.gov*