



2022 Forum on Aging in Rural Oregon



Presents,

Ageism Begins Within: Reframing a Universal Process

Speakers:

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- Presentation slides will be posted shortly after the session at:
<https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-of-rural-health/forum-aging-rural-oregon>.
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AGEISM BEGINS WITHIN

REFRAMING A UNIVERSAL PROCESS

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Communities + Generations + Innovations



AGEISM

**YOU'VE FELT IT. SEEN IT. EXPRESSED IT.
WE ARE ALL AGEIST.**

AGEISM IS ALL AROUND US

WHAT IS IT?

Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.

Ageism is the most widespread and socially accepted prejudice today according to the World Health Organization.



THE EFFECTS ARE BECOMING AMPLIFIED

AS OUR POPULATION SHIFTS, AGEISM COMES OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Demographics--more people

By 2030, there will be as many Oregonians 65+ as there are under 18. Already in many rural places 1 in 3 residents are over age 65.

Longevity--for longer

The overall average life expectancy in the U.S. is 78.7 years, although women tend to live longer (81.0 years) than men (76.2 years). Half of the babies born today are expected to live to be 100.

Intersectional—stuff adds up

We are all susceptible to experiencing ageism, but many populations experience ageism in conjunction with discrimination in other areas such as gender, race, sexuality and disability.

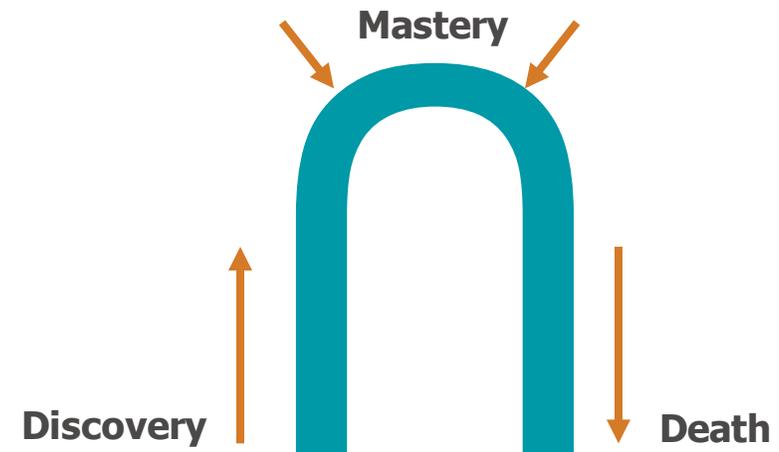




OLD FAMILIAR STORY

LIFE AS AN UPSIDE-DOWN U

We begin with **discovery**, advance upwards toward **mastery** at midlife, then begin the downhill decline towards **death**.



WHERE DO WE LEARN THIS?

The old story was written in an era when most people died much younger.

Age bias is deeply ingrained in us individually and as society, having been drummed into us through a youth-oriented media and popular culture.



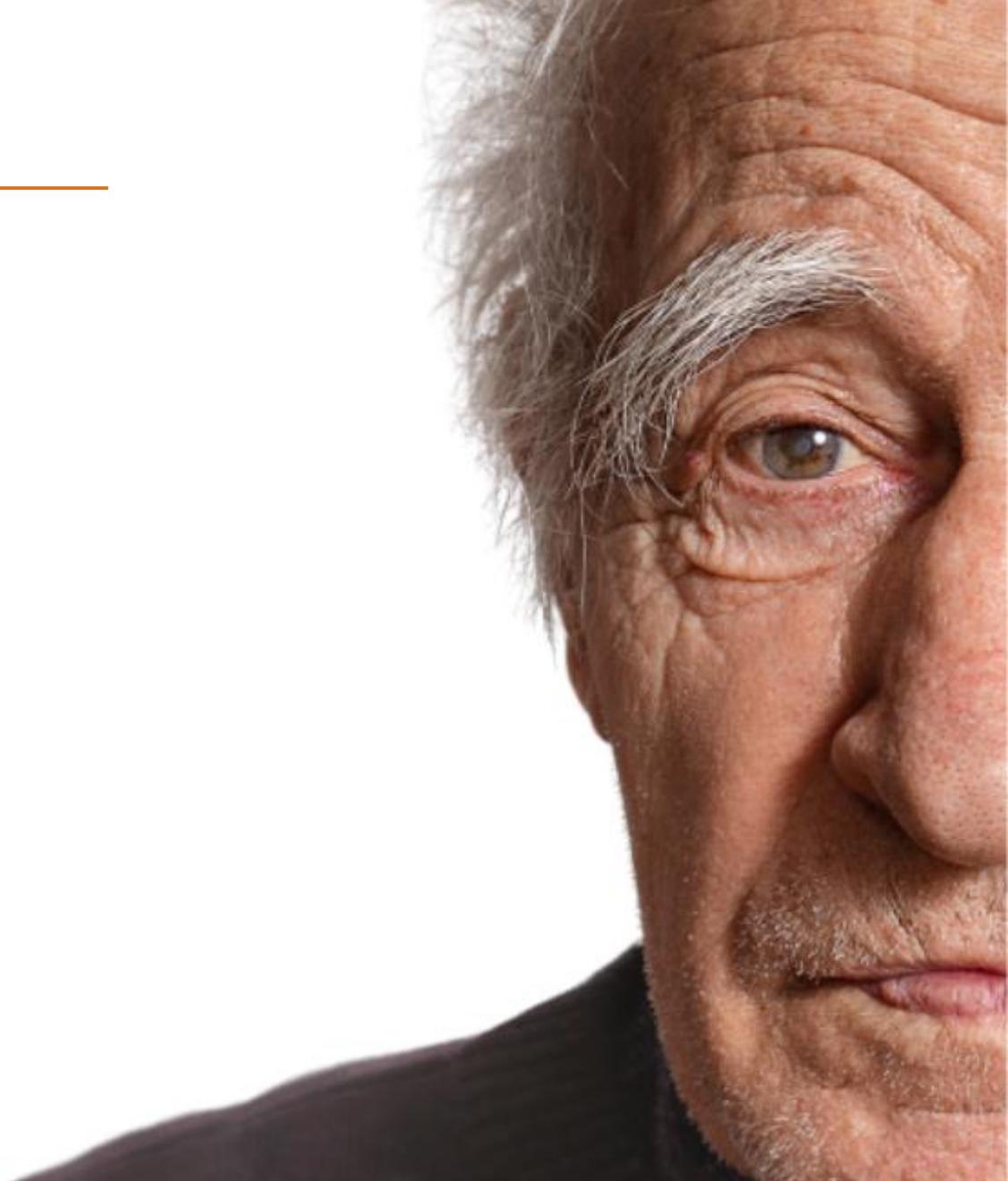


HOW'S IT WORKING OUT FOR US?
IS THIS THE FUTURE ANYONE WANTS?

THE COST OF THE OLD STORY

THE SOCIETAL EFFECTS OF AGEISM

- Increases inequities
- Ignores a broad pool of talent, creativity and experience
- Limits solutions and policies we consider
- Compounds economic impacts
- Increases costs (for individuals and systems/society)



THE COST OF THE OLD STORY

THE EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUALS

Negative stereotypes about age affect our health through psychological, biological, and behavioral pathways.

Negative beliefs ->lack of self-care ->negative beliefs

Age bias decreases our lifespan by 7.5 years.



THE COST OF THE OLD STORY

STEREOTYPES AFFECT INSTITUTIONS

- Less than 10% of American medical schools require geriatric training. Less than 1% of US medical school graduates choose it as their field of practice.
- There is about 1 geriatrician for every 3,000 older adults.
- Less than 1% of nurses, less than 2% of physical therapists, and less than 3% of social workers receive formal training in working with older adults.





SO, LET'S TELL IT LIKE IT IS

AGE IS CHANGE

A STAGE WHEN WE DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

- A slow and steady process that leads us to becoming our unique, individual selves.
- We become more complex, not simpler.
- Wear & tear do take a toll on the body, but we learn to adapt. Healthy aging coexists with chronic illness.
- Positive age beliefs -> exercise, social, intellectual/creative engagement -> positive age beliefs
- We have a story.



AGING IS GROWTH!

STILL EVOLVING AND MATURING BRAINS

- Our brains make new cells and connections until the day we die. It is not all loss and deterioration.
- We gain new coping mechanisms.
- We become more confident, less fearful of being judged.
- We focus on what really matters.



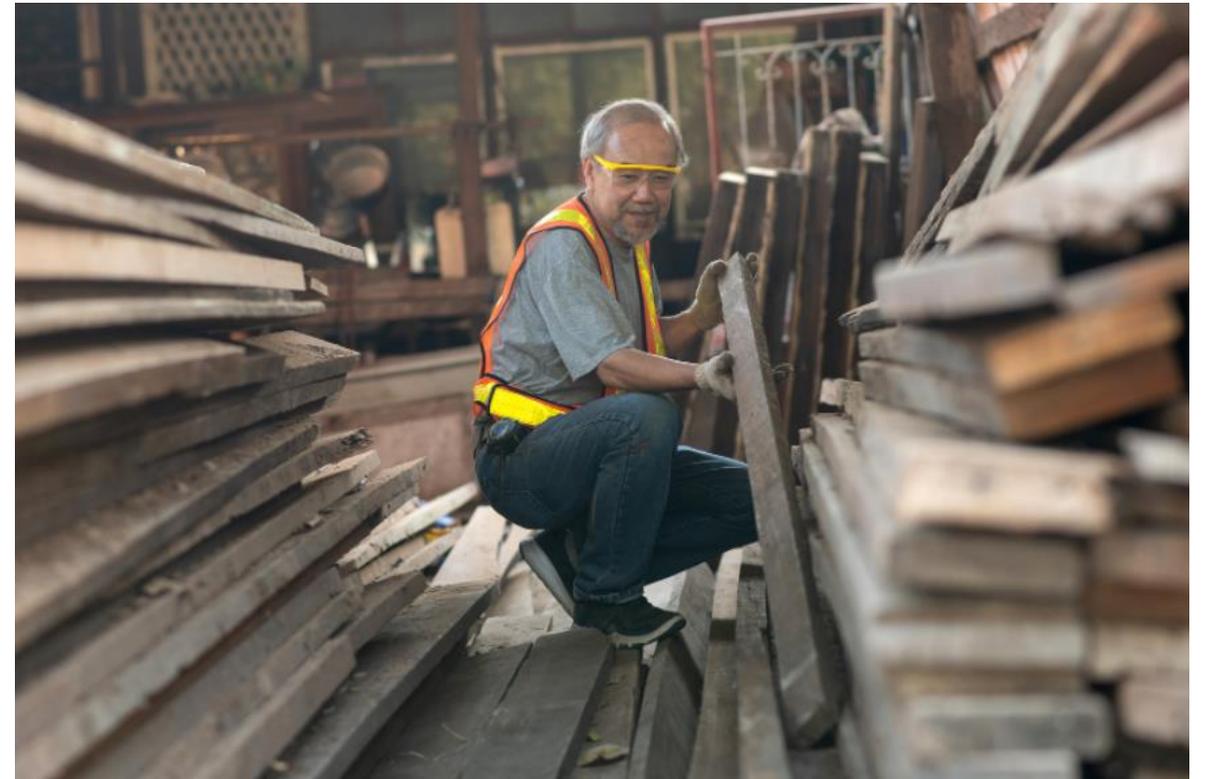


WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

PRACTICAL ADVICE

SMALL STEPS LEAD TO BIG CHANGE

- Acknowledge the role that you play
- Identify your own, internalized fears
- Change your thoughts, language/word choice and actions
- Recognize that we are all peers, no matter our age



PRACTICAL ADVICE

OUR GOOD INTENTIONS GO ASTRAY WHEN WE:

- Talk to older adults in high, cutesy voices or very loud voices.
- Use infantilizing references such as “daycare” and “diapers,” or call an older adult, “sweetie” or cute.
- Don’t speak directly to an older person but speak about them around them.
- Speak for them as if they can’t answer.
- Do for them as if they cannot do for themselves.



There is no “us” and “them.”
Ageism is the universal “ism.”
We are all “us.”

Let's talk!

**What can you do to disrupt
ageism in your everyday life?**



References

Print

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Championing a new vision for healthy and equitable aging for all Oregonians by empowering communities, linking generations and stimulating innovation to make longer life an opportunity, not a burden.

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Thank You, Partners!



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OPAL-K for kids and OPAL-A for adults