



**WE Are  
Canada**  
LESSON PACKAGE

**EXAMINING  
AGEISM**

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LESSON PACKAGE FOR GRADES 7 TO 8

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THEME: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION | SUBJECT: HEALTH



# WE Are Canada

## EXAMINING AGEISM

### WE LEARNING FRAMEWORK SKILLS LEGEND:



ARGUMENT  
FORMATION



INFORMATION  
LITERACY



LEADERSHIP  
SKILLS



ORGANIZATION



ACTION  
PLANNING



RESEARCH AND  
WRITING



CRITICAL  
THINKING



REFLECTION

**THEME:** Diversity and Inclusion

**SUBJECT:** Health

**GRADE LEVEL:** Grades 7 to 8

### LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW:

Ageism can be defined as making unfair judgments or assumptions about individuals based simply on their ages. For example, some adults assume that youth lack the maturity to complete complex tasks, while some young people automatically assume that all senior citizens are bad drivers. Students will study the practice of ageism through personal reflections and the examination of media and stereotyping tactics that are common on television and in real life. Students are invited to revisit their understanding of the ageing process and are encouraged to engage in meaningful service-learning activities that teach the importance of celebrating what brings us together. Students will see that the fundamental component of any relationship, including those between individuals from different generations, is respect.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

- ▶ Why is it harmful to discriminate against others because of their age?

### STUDENT LEARNING GOALS:

Students will:

- Determine and analyze their own attitudes towards ageism
- Communicate the ways in which stereotyping perpetuates ageist attitudes
- Recognize that self-perception is a critical factor in the development of personal health goals and that these goals vary across cultures
- Study the similarities and differences in individuals
- Empathize with older generations recognizing that mutual respect and equal consideration are important in the development and maintenance of multigenerational relationships
- Action plan and take action on a current issue to create awareness about ageism within local and national communities

### WORD BANK

**Age discrimination**—discrimination or differentiation on grounds of age

**Ageism**—prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age

**Discrimination**—the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex

**Empathy**—the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

**Multigenerational**—relating to several generations

**Stereotype**—a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing

**Senior Citizen**—an elderly person, especially one who is retired and living on a pension

**Teenager**—a person between the ages of 13 and 19 years

### MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Computer with Internet connection
- Relevant textbooks, books and dictionaries (examples of textbook, books)
- Projector for whole class viewing
- Blackline Master 1: Ageism Survey
- Blackline Master 2: Age-Related Scenarios

### Recommended Assessment for Learning:

You know your students best—their learning styles and preferences, skill levels, and knowledge. You are also best positioned to anticipate the habits of mind that will make this lesson package successful.

In this lesson package, teaching strategies include think-pair-share, collaborative group work, class discussion and independent reflection. Suggestions for demonstration of learning include written reflection, exit tickets and student-generated discussion. Please make any accommodations or modifications to best serve your students.

## LESSON 1:

# WHAT IS AGEISM?



### SUGGESTED TIME:

75 minutes

## Investigate and Learn

1. Ask students: Have you ever been judged by someone because of their age? Have students turn and discuss with a neighbour to share their stories.

**EDUCATOR'S NOTE:** Alternatively, show photos of people either really young or really old and allow students to share opinions and reactions to the photos to demonstrate the process of making assumptions based on appearance.

2. Explain that ageism occurs when people are unfairly judged or discriminated against because of their age. Write or project this definition on the front board.
3. Distribute **Blackline Master 1: Ageism Survey** to students and have students answer each question to determine their current attitude about age.
4. While students are taking the survey, write the following statements on the front board:
  - You're too young to understand.
  - Young people shouldn't give their opinions.
  - Teenagers these days....
  - If you want a job done right, ask an adult to do it.
  - You shouldn't be doing that at your age!
5. Ask students how they scored on the ageism survey. Take a tally of how many students may hold an ageist attitude (remember just one answer reflects this). Ask students to share their opinions about some of the statements.
6. Inform students that the statements on the board are also examples of age discrimination, except these are reflective of ageist attitudes towards young people, presumably made by adults.
7. Distribute copies of the following article. Engage the class in a read aloud.

“Ageism’ widespread, survey finds,” CTV News, [ctvnews.ca/canada/ageism-widespread-in-canada-survey-finds-1.1021641](http://ctvnews.ca/canada/ageism-widespread-in-canada-survey-finds-1.1021641).
8. Debrief the article with the class. Ask students what new information they learned about the ways that many Canadians feel about aging. Encourage students to be honest with their answers.

9. Review the key findings from the survey they just reviewed, noting that according to the survey, the three most common forms of age discrimination faced by Canadian seniors are:
  - Being ignored or treated as though they are invisible (41 percent)
  - Being treated like they have nothing to contribute (38 percent)
  - Assuming that seniors are incompetent (27 percent)
10. Assign students to one of the four corners of the classroom. Inform students that each group will be reading and responding to one of four scenarios. Once five minutes is up, each group will move onto a different corner and scenario and will repeat the same process. Refer to **Blackline Master 2: Age-Related Scenarios**.

**EDUCATOR'S NOTE:** Cut out the scenarios from **Blackline Master 2: Age-Related Scenarios** or rewrite them on large chart paper and post them in all four corners of the room. Cover the text until students are ready to engage in this activity.

11. Tell students that they will have five minutes at each of the four stations to read the scenario and to discuss their reactions. Encourage students to connect the three most common forms of age discrimination discussed earlier to each of the scenarios.
12. Ask each group of students to write a positive response to the situation and a potential negative response to the situation. Note that you are intentionally asking students to document two extremes in an effort to show the stark contrast in the ways that people are treated.
13. Review the activity with students. Ask them about their reaction to the scenarios and what they learned as a result of reading their peers' responses.
- 14.

**RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING:** Have students complete an exit ticket at the end of class responding to the following statement: “The solution to ageism starts with understanding that ageism is not just an old person's problem: it's a societal problem.” Alternatively, students can respond to the following statement found within the article they read aloud as a class: “Against this backdrop, we need to challenge our assumptions of aging and recognize the valuable contributions of older adults to society.”

## LESSON 2:

# STEREOTYPES AND AGEISM



### SUGGESTED TIME:

75 minutes

1. Draw a large circle on the board with the word "teenagers" in the centre. Alternatively, give small groups of students a piece of chart paper to complete the exercise themselves.
2. Ask students when they hear, see or think of the word "teenagers," what other words come to mind? Invite students up to the board to document their word associations by creating a word web surrounding the circle. Common word associations are: hyper, selfish, emotional, talkative, impulsive.
3. After students have had a few minutes to respond, ask the following questions:
  - What do you notice about attitudes toward people your age?
  - In what types of situations do you feel judged?
  - Does the way people view you affect how you feel about yourself?
  - How has the respect of adults helped you achieve your goals?
4. Review the concept of ageism—judgment passed on others simply because of their age.
5. Engage students in a class discussion. Ask them if they have ever experienced or known anyone who has experienced age discrimination. E.g., trying to participate in sports activities, applying for jobs, interactions at social events, etc.
6. Repeat the word web exercise, using the word "elderly" instead of teenagers. Common word associations are: tired, cranky, opinionated, wise, experienced and weak
7. After a few minutes of reflection, ask students the following questions:
  - How do you see older adults that you are close to, either relatives or close family friends?
  - Ask students if the adjectives up on the board are representative of these individuals.
  - What is your reaction to this word web?
  - Do you fit into any of the descriptions on the board?
8. Inform students that these exercises reflect the practice of stereotyping, a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing (Oxford Dictionary).
9. Show students "I'm a Teenager, So I Must Be Stereotyped" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQyZsM8nKkw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQyZsM8nKkw). Generate student discussion by asking students if any points made in the video resonated with them?

10. Show students "Stereotypes of the elderly," [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVh2EGxEIyE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVh2EGxEIyE).

Ask students to compare the stereotypes seen in the videos.

11. Inform students that even though there seems to be a divide between the young and old, both, through stereotyping and societal practices, are discriminated against on the basis of age. However, people should not be intentionally mistreated, especially when individuals are perceived as unable to defend themselves due to external factors, including age.
12. Show students "What would you do? The elderly harassed by youth," [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWGQ7fVGw2s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWGQ7fVGw2s). It's about the mistreatment of senior citizens and the respect and support that strangers offer in the face of danger
13. Ask students why they think the bystanders in the video volunteered to help the senior citizens? Students may also comment on what they would have done, or have done in similar situations.
14. As a class, list people that defy those stereotypes and discuss why these stereotypes are not true.

15.

**RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING:** Have students reflect on age. Given the fact that people mainly associate growing older with negative consequences, how might these attitudes, like the ones discussed within these lessons, affect a person's attitudes about growing old or about socializing or working alongside individuals who are from a different generation and time?

### LESSON 3:

## THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS



### SUGGESTED TIME:

150 minutes

### Action Plan

1. Explain to students that some of them might find it difficult or uncomfortable to imagine their future in the conditions of older people today. There's no way to predict the future. No one knows what life will be like 20, 30, 40 or 50 years from now, but we can be certain that respect and understanding will still be the best foundation for all of our relationships.

2. To apply their learning and experiences from the previous lessons students will conduct an interview with someone in their lives about ageism. Encourage students to interview a senior citizen. Some students may interview someone younger than them, since ageism transcends all ages.

3. **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING:** Have students record their interview on film or audio. Tell students that they will be assessed on the depth of questioning and their ability to maintain a respectful position during the interview.

4. Brainstorm a list of possible questions for your interviews. Suggest the following questions as a starting point:

- Have you ever been made fun of because of your age?
- Do you ever judge people because of their age?
- What is wrong with age discrimination?
- How does an ageist attitude affect our relationships with our families and friends?

5. Ask students how interviews may be a starting point for developing new relationships or a great way to strengthen existing relationships.

6. Ask students if they would like to further their commitment to diversity and inclusion in your community by taking the WE Are Canada Pledge. If students are interested, visit [WE.ca](http://WE.ca) for more information and to take the pledge.

7. Inform students that they will engage in an activity that fights ageism in practice and purpose. Ask students to create a list of potential activities that promote healthy relationships between generations. Some examples to get started include:

- Organizing an event at a local seniors centre that celebrates music (a universal tool used to tell the story of different generations). This might involve students going to a long-term care facility and engaging in conversations and activities with the residents to talk about the music they enjoy from years past and the present day.

- Volunteering to landscape/clean up senior citizens' yards.
- Creating signs to post in public places that inform individuals of pathways for accessibility, such as where the nearest elevator is or where individuals can find the nearest phone or bathroom.
- Volunteering to read stories to senior citizens.
- Assisting seniors on how to use a computer or cellphone.

8. Have students work in small groups to research different projects they can work on and invite each group to present their ideas to the class. Hold a vote to see which activity is the most popular and has the potential to have the greatest impact.

9. Once an activity is selected, ask students to generate a list of goals and expectations for their activity. How will they know if their efforts were a success? How might they benefit and grow as individuals as a result of taking part in these actions with individuals who are from another generation?

## LESSON 4:

# RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



### SUGGESTED TIME:

135 minutes

## Take Action

1. Allow students time to travel to their destination for their action and awareness campaign.
2. Document the event with pictures and interviews with individuals involved.
3. Ask students to reflect on their day's activities, interactions and overall experience. Encourage students to remember names and stories. These memories will likely influence their approach to issues surrounding ageism in the years to come.

## Report and Celebrate

4. Celebrate the success of the efforts by extending an invitation to others to take a role in the promotion of awareness of efforts to combat issues that stem from ageism. Continue to engage in conversations about the topic.
5. Document the success of the venture by sharing experiences during morning announcements, in the school's newspaper or on class bulletin boards.
6. Challenge those you share with to learn about and take action on an issue that will help raise awareness about ageism practice, the importance of equal treatment for all and the importance of eliminating stereotypes from our speech. Encourage them to investigate efforts towards combating ageism in different communities. Challenge them to try one of the following:
  - Make friends with someone older or younger than you
  - Stand up for yourself when someone exhibits an ageist attitude towards teenagers
  - Speak up if you hear someone making fun of another person because of their age

### REFLECT:

7. As a class, reflect on the learnings and experience from the Action Plan and Take Action sections of the lesson plan package. Think about the measureable goals that were set for the Take Action section. Using the evidence collected, reflect upon how well these goals were achieved through the action.
8. Write down the goals on the front board. Ask students to reflect through a written, verbal or visual response. Within the reflection, students should link the evidence collected in the Take Action section and directly align this to a measureable goal. Does the evidence demonstrate a success based on the goal?

9. Ask students to reflect further to understand the deeper impact of the Take Action section and to consider how they can ensure their event/campaign has lasting impacts:
  - How will we ensure that the initiatives we started will not be a one-time event, but instead continue each year?
  - How might we support the initiative in other school communities as needed?
  - How will involvement in WE Are One campaign help us deepen our understanding of important issues surrounding Canada's aging population?
  - How can we integrate celebrations into our school culture that celebrate initiatives that support equal treatment across generations?
10. Through research completed, actions implemented by students and the process of reflection, are students able to understand the importance of helping causes that are directly linked to issues surrounding age?



**EXTENSION:** Students may combine their video interviews into a single viewing session and present the footage at a school assembly or at their local seniors home in an effort to promote multigenerational relationships and respect for all ages and experiences.

# Blackline Master 1:

## Ageism Survey

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Directions: For each item below, circle "true" if you agree with the statement or "false" if you disagree with it. Use the response key on the bottom of this page to score your survey.

- |   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Old people are always much weaker than young people.                           | True | False |
| 2. Young children do not have enough life experience to have serious opinions.    | True | False |
| 3. It is wise to remind senior citizens about things in case they get confused.   | True | False |
| 4. Older people are horrible drivers.   | True | False |
| 5. Kids lack the social skills to be a part of adult conversations.               | True | False |
| 6. Old people smell bad.  | True | False |
| 7. Teenagers only care about themselves.  | True | False |
| 8. It's impossible for old people and young people to identify with each other.   | True | False |
| 9. Young people will never know the hardships their grandparents knew growing up. | True | False |
| 10. Teenagers care more about what happens on social media than in real life.     | True | False |

### RESPONSE KEY:

All of the statements above discriminate in some way against people simply because of their age. If you answered "true" for most of the statements, you may practice ageism without even realizing it. Revisit your "true" answers and put yourself in another's shoes. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were an older person.

# Blackline Master 2:

## Age-Related Scenarios

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### Scenarios:

**A.** On a rainy Saturday afternoon, Sarah, a retired school teacher, decided she would join the group outing at her retirement home. The group was visiting the local shopping mall and Sarah thought it would be a good opportunity for her to get some exercise and maybe buy a new book. After visiting a few clothing stores, Sarah decided to look around the crowded bookstore. Sarah loves books and has been an avid reader her entire life. After a few minutes of browsing the bestsellers section, an employee approached her, asking Sarah if she is able to read the text or if she wanted him to read her the description on the back of the book. Sarah was hurt and offended and left the bookstore without making a purchase.

**B.** When Robert was laid off after 45 years at his job, he decided to look for new job opportunities online. After applying for a position at a new marketing agency in downtown Toronto, he was called to come in for an interview the following week. When Robert showed up for the job interview he told the receptionist that he was there for a job interview for the intern position at the company. The woman let out a little laugh, and asked Robert if he knew how to work a computer. After his interview, Robert was told that the culture of the company might not be the right fit.

**C.** Betty had been retired for five years when she decided she wanted to take up a new hobby. She had always enjoyed cooking but decided that she would try a new hobby. While looking through the newspaper one Sunday morning, she noticed an advertisement for ballet classes at the local community centre. After much hesitation, Betty decided she would take a chance and attend the registration that afternoon. After showing up, Betty was nervous when she found herself surrounded by young adults; she felt old enough to be their grandmother. The girls around her whispered and giggled, subtly pointing fingers and acknowledging Betty's presence at the ballet registration. Betty felt ashamed and decided to go home.

**D.** When Tom graduated high school, it was his dream to attend university for a degree in science. But his help was needed with the family business and Tom decided that helping his family was the right thing to do. While having coffee with a friend one day, his friend asked what Tom's biggest dream was—it was still to receive his university degree. After much convincing from his friends and family, Tom decided to apply for university. On his first day of class, he received many confused looks from his peers as well as a few questions from students who mistook him as the professor. At age 67, Tom was nervous to be in a classroom with people much younger than him and he spent his first few weeks trying to ignore the stares he received each class.