

# Have You Experienced Ageism — Or Contributed to It?



May 8, 2025

## Take This Quiz!



**Quiz yourself by answering yes/no to the following questions.**

1. I gave or received a birthday card joking about age.
2. I addressed an older adult or have been addressed as “Honey” or “Sweetie” due to age.
3. I have watched commercials about or purchased anti-aging products like serums or creams.
4. I assume younger people are computer geniuses and older people are technologically inept.
5. I refer to a moment of forgetfulness as a “senior moment.”
6. In the workplace, I have experienced age-based discrimination like reduced opportunities for advancement or forced retirement.

7. I have patronized older adults or have been patronized by others using a high-pitched, sing-songy voice.
8. I have felt dismissed or dismissed other older adults because of age.

If you answered yes to even one of these questions, you have either experienced or contributed to ageism. This is likely true for most of us, as we live in a culture ingrained with ageist beliefs and practices, often unnoticed. May is Older Adults' Month, and the 2025 theme is "Flip the Script on Aging." Read on to learn how to do just that.



## What Is Ageism?

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According to The American Society on Aging, "Ageism refers to stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) toward others or oneself based on age." Ageism affects both young and old, but for our purposes, we will focus on its impact on older adults.

Ageism comes in a variety of forms.

- Institutional ageism refers to unfair restrictions in laws, policies or practices at the institutional level including workplace discrimination.
- Cultural ageism, found in movies, TV, songs, and jokes, involves negative messages that we internalize daily.

- Benevolent ageism refers to well-intentioned but demeaning practices like “elderspeak” or addressing older adults in a high-pitched voice or calling them “Dear” or “Honey.” It is rooted in the belief that older adults need to be protected and are unable to make decisions for themselves.

## Impact of Ageism

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Ageist beliefs and practices are not just insulting, they are unhealthy. Negative feelings about one’s aging can induce stress, leading to various health issues. Those who feel fatalistic are also less likely to maintain healthy habits, like exercising and regularly taking prescribed medications. Additionally, loved ones may neglect the mental health of older adults, viewing loneliness, depression, or worry as normal parts of aging.



## Prevalence of Ageism

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A 2020 University of Michigan national poll found that 82 percent of adults aged 50 to 80 reported exposure to ageist messages in their daily lives. An earlier study found that children as young as 3 are familiar with negative, age-based stereotypes, which are reinforced over a lifetime.

Despite stereotypes depicting older adults as grumpy or incapable, many report greater life satisfaction than younger people, an experience some call the paradox of aging. In the University of Michigan poll cited above, 88 percent reported feeling comfortable being themselves, and 65 percent considered life better than they thought it would be.

Additionally, 80 percent revealed a strong sense of purpose. Older adults are tremendous contributors to a productive society, as paid workers, volunteers, and caregivers. Nowhere is this more visible than Luther Manor.

## **Combatting Ageism**

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To “Flip the Script on Aging,” we must transform how society perceives, depicts, and approaches aging. We can start by recognizing and highlighting the many active older adults among us. Here at Luther Manor, this includes Dave who has contributed 5,000 volunteer hours to Luther Manor and Dan who regularly rides his recumbent bike. Another active resident is Sharon who writes, paints, and takes advantage of many offered activities like weekly games of Sheepshead.

Developing intergenerational connections also debunks stereotypes — about both young and old. Luther Manor welcomes groups of young people including Boy Scout troops, school groups, and church youth groups for service projects. While contributing to the volunteer need at Luther Manor, these opportunities help bridge the generational gap and expose the inaccurate, one-dimensional view of older adults.

For those middle aged, the knowledge that you can shape your own aging process is beneficial. A nutritious diet, regular physical activity, and a healthy lifestyle can set you up for an active life later.

Most importantly, we must remain thoughtful and intentional about how we speak about and to the older adults among us.

## **Volunteer Sign In**

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It is flu shot season. Remember to submit proof of vaccination. The residents thank you!

[OK](#)