



## **Addressing Ageism**

### **Awareness and Acknowledgment.**

The critical starting point is awareness and acknowledgment of our own attitudes and prejudices about aging and older people. How and where we're raised, the amount of time spent with older people, the quality of our interactions with older people, and the type of media we watched, read, or listened to all contributed to our attitudes about aging. Negative attitudes on aging can damage our sense of self, diminish our opportunities and prospects, segregate us from others in the community, and shorten lives. We're responsible to ourselves, and future generations, to own the way we feel about aging, understand the reasons we feel the way we do, and seek to address them.

### **Check and Challenge.**

Once we become aware of and acknowledge our attitudes on aging and older people, the next thing to do is check and challenge our words and actions. What messages are we sending around aging and older people? Are our thoughts, attitudes and behaviors toward older adults, fair, realistic and appropriate? Are we using terms and expressions that perpetuate ageism?

It's important to take time to learn about aging, ageism, and age discrimination. It is very common for older people to face discrimination in employment, housing, health, and other key services. They may be treated as a burden on services or excluded from opportunities. The better informed we are about aging and what to expect, the better we will be able to embrace our aging, as well as recognize and stand-up against the many inaccurate and negative stereotypes of aging. It will sensitize us to prejudice and discrimination toward older people and better equip us to distinguish normal age-related changes from ageist behaviors. Mostly, it will help us spot policies, practices, and systems that may negatively affect our well-being as we age, and the well-being of older adults as a group.

### **Connect and Converse.**

A community that is livable and equitable for all ages requires interactions and collaborations among all ages. Listening to the stories, experiences, and concerns of people, older and younger than us, helps us become better informed about opportunities to build a stronger community for people of all ages. Quality interactions with people of different ages helps break down myths, stereotypes, and misinformation about aging. It also provides stories and examples to give us confidence to speak up regarding ageist words and actions among family, friends, colleagues, the community, and the media.

*To learn more about York County Community Foundation's Embracing Aging, visit [www.embracingaging.org](http://www.embracingaging.org) or contact Cathy Bollinger, Managing Director of Embracing Aging at [cbollinger@yccf.org](mailto:cbollinger@yccf.org) or 717.848.3733*