



When interviewing older persons with hearing or cognitive challenges:

- Find a quiet place.
- Explain why you want to talk with them.
- Stick with one topic at a time.
- Speak in short sentences but avoid talking down to the person as though they were a child.
- Give the person enough time to respond!
- Actively listen and respond to any questions.

Include older adult voices in these stories:

- Older adults' contributions to today's society.
- Financial stories on planning, legal tips, avoiding scams.
- Work (volunteer or paid) done by older adults.
- Medical reality stories – may illustrate ageism or inclusion in medical systems.
- Pharmacare.
- Community inclusion or isolation.

For more information and support, contact:

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**WORDS
are
POWERFUL**

Tips for Journalists

Aging

– a highly individual experience

Assumptions based on age don't work!

Language that makes generalizations and assumptions based on age alone can be inaccurate and even insulting.

Ageist

“You can't teach old dogs new tricks!”

“Seniors don't use social media.”

“Change freaks them out.”

“Dr. Frank Martinez, a senior citizen, continues to maintain a vigorous practice despite his age.”

Danger! – Tempting Adjectives

Do I need to use this adjective?
Does it add to the story?

DANGER

Little, sweet, adorable, spry, frail, eccentric, elderly, ancient, cute are examples of adjectives that can demean and/or infantilize an older person.

“Jane W. is a feisty, spry little lady who bustles about the room as she serves tea.”

Person Centred Language

- Recognizes the impact of language on thoughts and actions.
- Does not diminish the uniqueness and intrinsic value of each person.

Older adults are **NOT** “one size fits all”.

“Jane W is an energetic 85 year old who is pleased to welcome visitors to her home.”

Young Forever?

Recognize the reality of aging – everyone will show and feel bodily signs of age.

To try to compliment an older person by referring to them as ‘*young*’ demonstrates that young is desirable, old is not.

Advertising often uses youth-centric language such as *young at heart*. Some ads even blatantly claim to “stop aging” by using their product.

Elder and Elderly

Elderly carries with it the connotation of frailty and weakness. Use carefully.

Elder, especially as used in indigenous communities, is a term of respect, seen as a vibrant source of wisdom.

Age Positive

“People who are not familiar with technology face challenges as they learn how to use tools such as computers and smart phones.”

“Dr. Frank Martinez, now seventy years old, continues to maintain a vigorous practice.”

How do you address an older adult?

Sweetie, honey, dear, darling, young lady are seemingly kind but offensive endearments.

Older adults deserve respect. Instead of calling them what they're not, call them by their names - Ms. Smith or just plain Judith.

Ageist

“Even though he turned 80 he is forever young.”

“I can't believe you are 78!”

“You could pass for much younger.”

“Oh, you're not old!”

HUMOUR

Every joke contains a grain of truth.

“Grandma is so wrinkled she needs a bookmark to find her mouth.”

“My old Uncle Ed still whistles at girls but can't remember why.”

Humour can be ageist if directed at another age group. It can spread cultural stereotypes about older adults. Use it carefully.



happy
Birthda

