

Tips and Tools to Reframe the Conversation on Aging and Elder Abuse

What is Reframing and why should we reframe?

Reframing is a communications approach that promotes mindful and positive messaging. Our words are powerful and impactful. If misused, they can foster misperceptions and cause harm. Reframing can help us engage in constructive and accurate conversations about a range of topics.



Why do we need to Reframe language about aging and elder abuse?

Aging is a universal and unique process. There is significant variability among older adults in areas ranging from health needs and function, income, and education, to social identity and employment. Older adults have a diverse range of identities, abilities, interests, experiences, and expertise across domains. Sometimes, individuals may say things, even inadvertently, that foster stereotypical, prejudicial, or discriminatory language about older people. For example, language that refers to older people as a group in negative ways – like being cranky, dependent, or useless – can negatively impact people’s understandings of aging and older age. These attitudes can be harmful to older adults. This is ageism.

How are ageism and elder abuse linked?

Ageism is one of the most common, yet least recognized and most accepted forms of prejudice. It contributes to intolerance within society and can potentially create an environment in which elder mistreatment is more likely to occur.

What is the Reframing elder abuse initiative?

Reframing Elder Abuse proposes a solutions-oriented approach to age-bias. The messaging strategy highlights the values of elder justice, safety, and security. It frames elder abuse as a shared concern that impacts us all as a community.

How can Reframing language promote elder rights and justice?

Our language sends a message about our attitudes and beliefs. When our conversations accurately convey perceptions about aging and older people as valued members of society with fundamental agency, we are affirming elder rights and justice.

Why is this important?

All people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sex, and gender. Promoting this ideal is important to us as individuals and as members of our communities.

What are some things that we can do to Reframe the conversation?

Each member of society, regardless of age, can promote positive and accurate perceptions of aging. By focusing on older adult autonomy and contributions we can change the collective conversation on aging and elder abuse. Shifting the public's understanding of aging, age equality, and abuse prevention can lead to culture change. Be mindful of your own age biases and stand up to ageism. Prevent elder abuse by supporting the right of each person to live with dignity and respect.

What are some examples of Reframed language that I can use to highlight the agency and initiative of older people?



How can I be part of the solution to advance elder justice and prevent abuse?

- Challenge ageism, stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age
- Use person-centered language in communications with and about older people
- Accurately explain facts relating to elder abuse and aging
- Suggest solutions-oriented approaches to advance elder rights and justice

Resources

[Reframing Elder Abuse](#)

[National Center to Reframe Aging](#)