

## **Aging and Ageism: A Warm-Up Exercise to Explore Participants' Perceptions about Aging**

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| <b>Purpose</b>                  | This brief warm-up activity will enhance participants' awareness of their perceptions about aging. The exercise can be followed by a discussion about ageism.  |
| <b>Time Needed</b>              | About 5–10 minutes, depending on size of audience and follow-up discussion.  |
| <b>Target Audience</b>          | Any audience. This exercise was created for a multidisciplinary audience. It can be used with professionals from: domestic violence and sexual assault programs; elder abuse/adult protective services; aging services; social services; justice system; health care; and other organizations. |
| <b>Audience Size</b>            | Any size, although it is easier for participants to hear each other with a smaller group.  |
| <b>Pre-Training Preparation</b> | None.  |
| <b>Equipment Needed</b>         | None – although a microphone is recommended for larger groups  |
| <b>Room Arrangement</b>         | Any room arrangement works.  |
| <b>Slides</b>                   | Slides with the directions and key talking points can be found at <a href="http://www.ncall.us">www.ncall.us</a> .   |
| <b>Variations</b>               | This exercise can be done in pairs, small groups or a large group. It can be used as part of introductions.  |

### **Overview of this Exercise**

This exercise is a warm-up activity to give participants a chance to get to know each other and start participants thinking about their attitudes towards aging.

## **Prior to Running the Exercise**

None.

## **Facilitating the Exercise**

Determine if you want to facilitate the exercise with participants in pairs, small groups or a large group discussion. Invite participants to give an introduction that includes their name, the name of their agency, their age, and one thing they feel about being their age.

Model an introduction of yourself. For example, "I'm Mary Smith. I work for ABC Inc. I am 45 years old and I enjoy being old enough to have some wisdom but young enough not to have significant health issues."

Some people may choose not to reveal their age. Telling their age is not mandatory. Anyone can opt to pass.

Close the activity with a large group debrief.

## **Potential Discussion Questions/Talking Points**

This is an opportunity for participants to discuss their feelings about aging. It can be useful to discuss feelings of discomfort or generational differences with the group.

- Ask how it felt to reveal their age to others.
- Ask if anyone chose not to reveal his or her age.
- Comment on any reactions you noticed from the audience when you gave the directions. Often there is a noticeable reaction in body language or behavior, such as nervous laughter.
- Consider using this exercise to launch a larger discussion about ageism. Ask participants how ageism might have an impact on our work.