



## Confronting the Stereotypes\*

This activity encourages program participants to think critically about the stereotypes they have of other generations.

***To begin the activity, the statements listed below could be read out loud, written on a blackboard or large sheet of paper, or they could be typed up and handed out.***

1. They always stick together and keep their distance from other age groups.
2. I hate the way they drive. They're a menace on the road.
3. They're always taking and never giving. They think the world owes them a living.
4. They're so opinionated. They think they know it all.
5. They're never satisfied, always complaining about something.
6. Don't hire them, you can't depend on them.
7. Don't they have anything better to do than hang around the parks and shopping malls?
8. Why are they always so forgetful?
9. I wish I had as much freedom as they have.
10. Why don't they act their age?

***Participants should then be given the following instructions:***

Discuss each statement in terms of whether you think a younger person is talking about older people or an older person is talking about young people, and why.

Note that each of these statements expresses a stereotype about a group of people only defined as "they." Which statements represent common stereotypes of young people? Of older people? Of both?

Stereotypes are the basis for prejudice and discrimination. As a youth or an adult, have you ever experienced (or known anyone who experienced) prejudice or discrimination based on age (for example, when applying for a job, renting an apartment, or trying to participate in some activity of another age group)?

Can both younger and older people be the victims of prejudice and discrimination based on age? Are there any other ways in which "growing up" is similar to "growing old?" What are they?

What could and should be done about age-based prejudice and discrimination? Is this a problem that older and younger people could work on together?

\* This activity is adapted from the "Growing Up and Growing Older: Confronting Ageism" activity developed by Fran Pratt, Director of the Center for Understanding Aging in Framingham, MA. Similar activities can be found at the Web site for the National Academy for Teaching and Learning about Aging (Denton, TX) (<http://www.unt.edu/natla/index.html>).