



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.8 Respecting Age

### **Objectives**

Identify attitudes, biases, or preconceived notions about the temperament, ability, and other characteristics of older adults.

Understand the effects of disempowering language on this group of people.

Examine assumptions about the definition of the “norm” as it relates to age.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper; copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students consider certain descriptive words and phrases often applied to older adults.

Ask them to identify the assumptions inherent in these descriptors.

Ask them to consider the “norm” as it relates to age.



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## 1.8 Respecting Age Handout

### Directions

Consider the terms below and answer the following questions:

To which age group are they routinely applied?

What connotations (assumptions) do they convey about the temperament, ability, and other characteristics of this age group?

How does the use of such terms disempower the target group?

What is the “normative” age group?

Well preserved  
Crotchety  
Spry/Sprightly  
Spunky  
Over the hill  
Decrepit  
Crusty

Fogey  
Alert  
Saintly  
Feisty  
Biddy  
Ancient  
Battle-ax

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Now, write sentences applying each of the terms to the “normative” age group.

Answer the following questions:

Do the descriptors sound incongruous, diminutive, or condescending when applied to the “normative” group?

Is “derogatory” in the ears of the listener or the mouth of the speaker?