



**National Center to Reframe Aging**  
LED BY THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

## Reframe Aging: A Generation's Work

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Wisconsin's Aging, Disability, and IL Network Forum  
September 18, 2024

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1

Imagine the future!



**National Center to Reframe Aging**

10-years from now, what is the headline you'd like to see about services for older people and people with disabilities?

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# Key Barrier Standing in Our Way

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## National Center to Reframe Aging



Climb aboard the caravan!  
#ReframeAging

Dedicated to reshaping the conversation about aging

### Core Elements of Reframing Aging Workshop

Trusted source for proven communication strategies



Cultivating a movement

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# Leaders of Aging Organizations



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# Funding Provided by:



The John A. Hartford Foundation



RRF Foundation for Aging



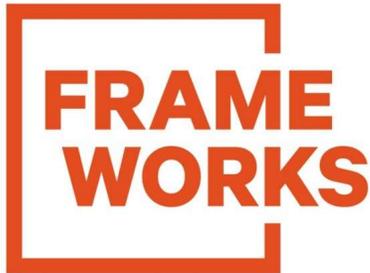
ARCHSTONE FOUNDATION

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6

# Research Partner



- Nonprofit think tank with the mission to advance the nonprofit sector’s capacity to reframe social issues.
- Conducts original, scholarly research on the communications aspects of social and scientific issues.
- Recognized in 2015 with the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.
- Original research conducted by FrameWorks Institute Distributed for educational purposes by the National Center to Reframe Aging

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7

**The Age-Friendly Ecosystem**  
Sectors and Initiatives

- Public Health: Age-Friendly Public Health Systems
- Workplaces: Age-Friendly Workplaces
- Home & Community-based Services: Aging Network
- Cities, Communities, States: AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities
- Education & Research: Age-Friendly University Global Network
- Healthcare Systems: Age-Friendly Health Systems
- Age-Friendly Policies, Practices & Communications

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8

## Ageism Defined



**Ageism exists in several forms**

- Stereotypes: *How we think*
- Prejudices: *How we feel*
- Discrimination *How we act*

**Ageism exists on multiple levels**

- Interpersonal
- Compassionate
- Systemic/ Institutional
- Self-directed

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9

## Implicit Bias Defined



Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

**Simply being aware of our implicit bias reduces ageism.**

Busso DS, Volmert A, Kendall-Taylor N. "Reframing aging: Effect of a short-term framing intervention on implicit measures of age bias." *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* 74.4 (2019): 559-564.

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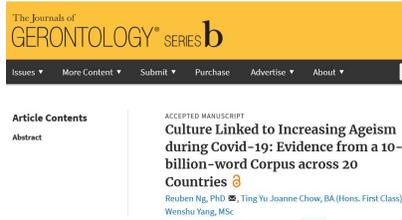
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10

# Why We Need a New Story!



Media Coverage

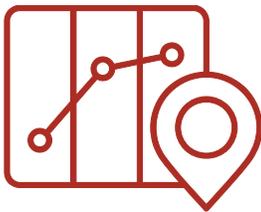


Academic Press



Personal Consumption

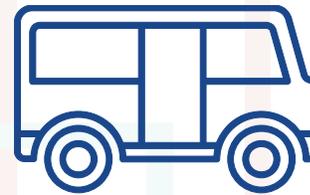
# What does it take to reframe an issue?



Map the terrain



Develop a strategy to navigate to higher ground



Build a caravan, equip the travelers, and start moving

## Ageism's Impact on Health

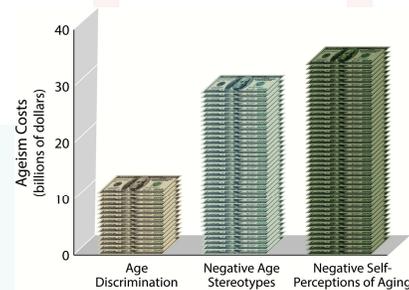
1-year cost of ageism \$63 billion

\$1 in every \$7 spent for 8 most expensive health conditions

Negative attitudes and beliefs



**Figure 1.** Health care costs of age discrimination, negative age stereotypes, and negative self-perceptions of aging in ...



*Gerontologist*, Volume 60, Issue 1, February 2020, Pages 174–181,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gny131>

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14

## The Power of Positive Thinking



**Positive age beliefs can have a positive impact on health by:**

- reducing stress
- increasing longevity <sup>2</sup>

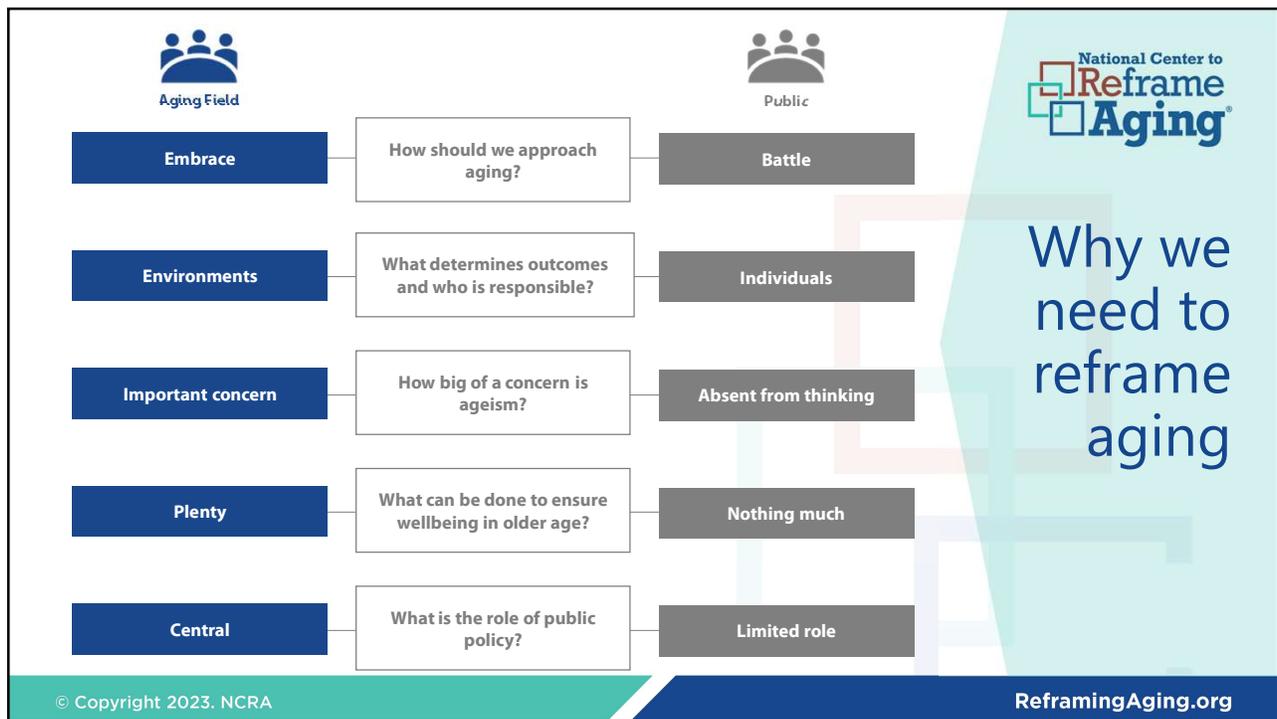


1. Levy BR, Slade MD, Kunkel SR, Stanislav V (2002) Longevity increased by positive self-perceptions of aging. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83(2): 261-270

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15



16

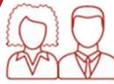


17

# You Say... They Think



**“We are all aging”**



Aging Professional/Advocate

**Collective Responsibility & Benefit**



Public

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18



# What is Framing & Why it Matters

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19

# Framing is About Choices!



**!**  
**What to emphasize**

**?**  
**How to explain it**

**⊘**  
**What to leave unsaid**

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# Shared Communications Lead to Systems Change



**Communications**

**Discourse**

**Thinking**

**Policy**

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# Navigating Public Understanding

## Traps to Avoid & Strategies to Advance

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### ★ Strategies to Advance

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude

To spark a more accurate and complete conversation about aging, **advance** these communication strategies.

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25

**Strategies to Advance**

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude



**The idea we're communicating:**

- As we age, we gain new insights and experiences that can power up our communities

**What it does:**

- ✓ Inspires a different story about aging
- ✓ Reduces bias
- ✓ Steers people away from othering older people

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26

**Strategies to Advance**

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude






*Before*                      *After*

**Age Strong Shuttle Redesign**

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27

## Strategies to Advance

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude



**The idea we're communicating:**

- We all rely on web of services and supports throughout our lives.

**What it does:**

- ✓ Steers people away from othering older people
- ✓ Cultivates understanding that what surrounds us shapes us
- ✓ Prompts appreciation for the idea that age inclusive policy is good policy for everyone
- ✓ Cues collective responsibility and benefit

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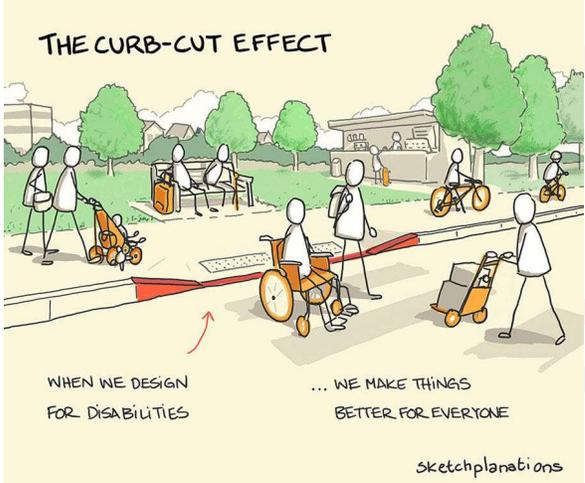
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28

## Strategies to Advance

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude





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29

## Strategies to Advance

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude



### The idea we're communicating:

- We are creative, inventive, problem-solving people. We have solved big problems before, and we can do it again!

### What it does:

- ✓ Steers people away from fatalistic thinking (that nothing can be done)
- ✓ Encourages solutions-oriented thinking
- ✓ Cues collective responsibility and benefit

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30

## Strategies to Advance

- Talk about the process of aging as building momentum
- Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age
- Prompt the can-do attitude







**City Center Signs**  
Age Friendly Worthington: Worthington, Ohio

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**Traps to Avoid**

- Individualism**
- Us vs. Them**
- Vulnerability**

To help your messages be understood as you intend, avoid these communication traps.

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32



**Individualism**

**Individualism Trap:**

- Lifestyle Choices
- Financial Planning

**Examples of Trap:**

- “To age well all you have to do is exercise and eat healthy”
- “You have to ensure you’re saving enough money to be able to retire, poor decisions now will have consequences later”

Save now & eat healthy!

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33

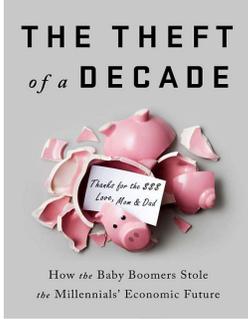
## ! "Us" vs. "Them"

**"Us" vs. "Them" Trap:**

- Older as "other"
- Zero sum
- Digital incompetence

**Examples of Trap:**

- "We cannot support everyone, if we increase support for older people, we won't be able to support the needs of others"





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## ! Vulnerability

**Vulnerability Trap:**

- Paternalistic Language
- Victim / Savior Complex

**Examples of Trap:**

- "Many people who are older are frail, vulnerable, cannot help themselves, and depend on others to meet their most basic needs."



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When a Frame “works,” It Shifts Thinking in Multiple Ways

-  Knowledge Increases
-  Attitudes Improve
-  Policy Support Grows

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36

**National Center to Reframe Aging**

# Resources & Next Steps

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37

# National Center Resources



**Reframing Aging Quick Start Guide**

Thinking in the geriatric is a policy choice about who we recognize and where we focus resources. It's a choice about who we include in our conversations in retirement.

Instead of these words and uses:	Try:
"Older adults," "seniors," and "elderly" (especially when they are the primary population of an article)	Referring with respect and showing honorifics: "The Honorable and the Honorable and the Honorable..."
"Older adults," "seniors," "elderly," and "older" (used as adjectives to describe people)	Using descriptive terms to describe individuals: "The Honorable and the Honorable..."
"Older adults," "seniors," "elderly," and "older" (used as adjectives to describe things)	Using descriptive terms to describe things: "The Honorable and the Honorable..."
"Older adults," "seniors," "elderly," and "older" (used as adjectives to describe places)	Using descriptive terms to describe places: "The Honorable and the Honorable..."

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**Learning Center**

Caravan: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REFRAMING AGING INITIATIVE

Changing the Conversation Toolkit

TOOLKIT

View Catalog and Your Dashboard

**Caravan**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REFRAMING AGING INITIATIVE

News + Articles

Partnership with Lincoln WI Shows New Culture of Retirement

**WORDS MATTER**

The National Center to Reframing Aging

How to use the Reframing Aging Toolkit

[reframingaging.org/Resources](https://reframingaging.org/Resources)

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38

# Learn from our partners!



**Reframing Advocacy to Increase Budgetary Support for Aging in Ohio**

Example from an Association of Area Agencies on Aging

JOIN US IN TELLING A NEW STORY ABOUT AGING!

**AGING: SO COOL EVERYONE IS DOING IT!**

Example from an advocacy organization

JOIN US IN TELLING A NEW STORY ABOUT AGING!

**How Advocates Reframed the Aging Agenda**

Example from an advocacy organization

JOIN US IN TELLING A NEW STORY ABOUT AGING!

**One well-positioned person can change a state:**

Example from a State Unit on Aging

JOIN US IN TELLING A NEW STORY ABOUT AGING!



[reframingaging.org/about-us/impact](https://reframingaging.org/about-us/impact)

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39

## Recommendations when using images:

*Based on research from FrameWorks Institute and AARP*

- 1

When depicting older people with limited mobility, use images in which they are participating in activities or engaged with others
- 2

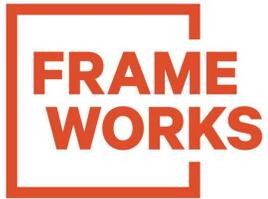
When showing older people using technology, show images that signal comfort and competence
- 3

In most cases, avoid images of “super seniors.” Use images of workplace settings to depict older people as active contributors to our communities.
- 4

Use images of older people in workplace settings to help people see them as active contributors to our communities
- 5

Use images that depict older people in positive settings and engaged in positive activities
- 6

When possible, select images based on your target audience


FrameWorks Institute and AARP (2022). Reframing Aging Through Images: Recommendations from Research. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute and AARP.

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40

## Learn to Avoid Elderspeak!



**We are ALL aging – how do you want to be spoken to?**  
 Through verbal and non-verbal language, we can create adult personhood by acknowledging and honoring older adults' unique identities, and our speech can get in the way (Elderspeak uses open-closed) language and is often driven by ageist stereotypes or the belief that accommodation is needed. While aimed at expressing care or enhancing comprehension, it is demeaning, and can make caregivers seem less respectful or nurturing, dominant, and authoritative.

Try saying this:	Instead of saying this:	BeC
Older Adults/Person/People	Senior/Senior Citizen/Elderly	Implies frailty or performance issue
Person with dementia or cognitive impairment	Demented/Senile	Disrespectful and stigma
"You are beautiful!" "You have vibrant energy!"	"You are beautiful for your age!" "You are young at heart!"	Implies that you, aging, is shameful
"How can I help you be safe?" "Assure your independence. Do you need any support?"	"Should you still be doing that?" "This is done at your age!" "You're so independent!"	Can discourage) implies that girl/guys/they depend on you
"You may fall without the walker!" "Ensure may help your nutrition!"	"You must use the walker!" "Drink this Ensure!"	Implies control; Explain why you service.
Preferred name or title "Good morning, Mrs. J."	Sweetie, Dear, Honey "Good morning, honey!"	Pit names can minimize the person's individuality
"You, I." "Are you ready for breakfast?"	We, Us, Our "Are we ready for our breakfast?"	Plural pronoun capitalizes on individual
"Are you ready to take a bath?" "Which hat do you wear?"	"You're ready for a bath, aren't you?" "You wear the green hat, right?"	Tag questions to lack of choice
"I hear that you're in pain." "Is there for you?"	"Now, now it's not that bad." "Bless your heart."	Implies inability to soothe or r
Wound, Blister, Stomach Diapers, Canteen, Day Center	Ducky, Bunkie, Tummy Diapers, Behavior, Day Care	Child-like words minimize
"I see you ate all of your dinner!" "Let me know if you need help."	"Good job finishing your dinner!" "Wow, you finished your dinner!"	Phrasing for task praise a younger consciousness

**Communication Techniques**

Deconstructing requests and building relationships requires more than just words. Effective communication can be achieved by drawing attention to our behaviors, actions, and the way we speak.

Try doing this:	Instead of doing this:
Be on a low, medium level, low-mid range pitch/voice	Using a high-pitched, sing-song, over-nurturing voice
Maintain pitch or tone of voice	Increasing tone of voice at the end of a sentence
Use regular speech pattern and vocabulary and syntax	Using simple speech patterns or vocabulary
Use hearing devices or identify a "helper" use if needed	Speaking loud or slow, using exaggerated inflections
Assess room and allow the person to speak	Only using closed-ended questions
Face and speak directly to the older adult	Addressing the caregiver instead of the older adult
Maintain eye contact, make positive eye contact	Eye rolling, closed eyebrows, and crossing, hand-to-hand
Head and act in a calm, authorized manner	Reacting to complete the task or encounter
Ask to turn off or mute any potentially distracting devices	Leaving the TV or radio on

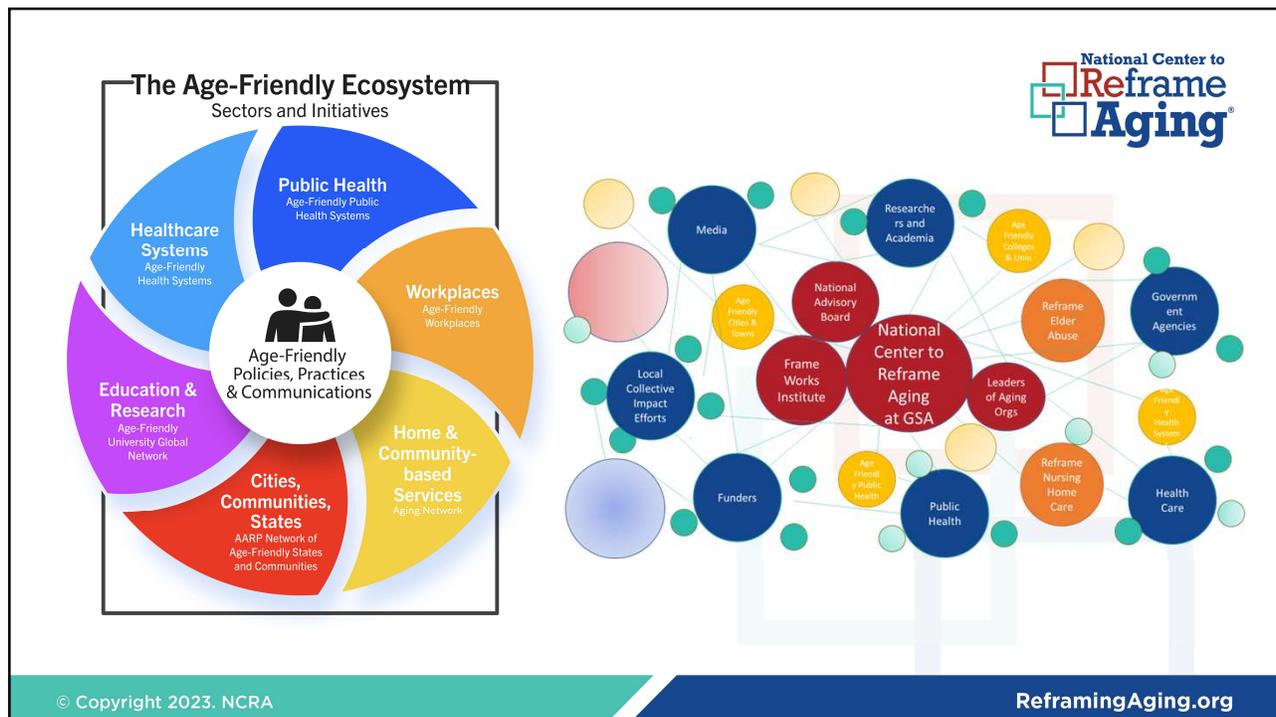
Every person and situation are unique.  
 Avoid assumptions! Ask about and honor communication needs and preferences.



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<https://catch-on.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Anti-Elderspeak-Language-Guide-CATCH-ON-2024.pdf>

41



42

# Let's set-up a reminder!



1. Open your calendar app
2. Go to a date one month from today at 9 a.m. (your local time)
3. Create a new calendar appointment
  1. Subject: What have I done to reframe aging this month?
  2. Message: Review the resources from the National Center to Reframe Aging (link: [www.reframingaging.org/Resources](http://www.reframingaging.org/Resources)) and reach out to the team if I have questions! [Reframingaging@geron.org](mailto:Reframingaging@geron.org)
4. Make it a monthly recurring calendar invitation!



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43

# Frame On!



**Productive perceptions of aging are priceless**



Trish D'Antonio  
Executive Director  
[pdantonio@geron.org](mailto:pdantonio@geron.org)



Hannah Albers  
Program Director  
[halbers@geron.org](mailto:halbers@geron.org)

Join in the conversation!



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 @ReframeAging	 @ReframingAging
 @NationalCentertoReframeAging	 <a href="http://www.reframingaging.org">www.reframingaging.org</a>



# Building Our Narrative

Tips to get you started in how this applies to your work

## Framing is About Choices!



**What to  
emphasize**



**How to  
explain it**



**What to leave  
unsaid**

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47

## Framing Vulnerability



### The message

Many people who are older are frail, vulnerable, cannot help themselves, and depend on others to meet their most basic needs. This leaves them at risk for all kinds of challenges and potential harms.

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49

## Framing Vulnerability



### The message – unframed

Many people who are older are **frail, vulnerable**, cannot help **themselves**, and depend on others to meet **their** most basic needs. This leaves **them** at risk for all kinds of challenges and potential harms.

### What the message does

#### Traps

- Individualism
- Us vs. Them

#### Lack of solutions thinking

- People think of solutions at an individual level – guardianship, family support, etc.

#### No impact

- No policy or systems change

## Framing Vulnerability – Reframed



### The message – reframed

When community bonds are weak, older people who are frail are more at risk of experiencing harm. We need to build solid connections and strengthen our social structure to better support older people, families, caregivers, and our entire community.

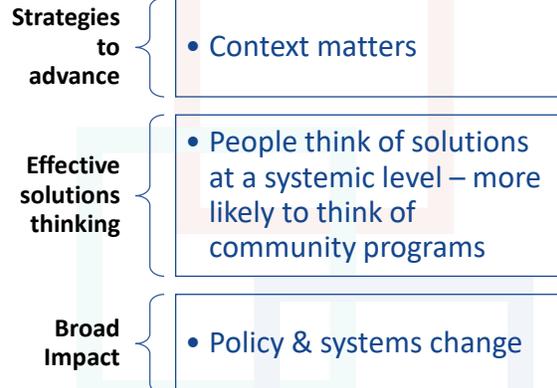
# Framing Vulnerability – Reframed



## The message

**When community bonds** are weak, older people who are frail are more at risk of experiencing harm. **We** need to build solid connections and strengthen **our social structure** to better support older people, families, caregivers, and **our entire community**.

## What the message does



# Housing Shortages



## The message

“The population of seniors in the United States is expected to grow, as is the number of seniors who have a chronic disease or functional limitation. The current U.S. housing stock is ill-equipped to meet the needs of this population. By employing strategies such as improving the accessibility of the housing stock, partnering with health service providers to link health care and housing, and matching services and amenities to resident needs, local governments and housing providers can help these seniors meet their needs and age outside of an institutional setting.”

# Housing Shortages



## The message

**“The population of seniors in the United States is expected to grow, as is the number of seniors who have a chronic disease or functional limitation.** The current U.S. housing stock is ill-equipped to meet the needs of this population.

By employing strategies such as improving the accessibility of the housing stock, partnering with health service providers to link health care and housing, and matching services and amenities to resident needs, local governments and housing providers can help **these seniors** meet **their needs** and age outside of an institutional setting.”

## What the message does

Traps

- Us vs. Them
- Fatalism

Solutions

- People are more likely to be passive in their support for solutions

Impact

- Little support for policy or systems change

# Housing Shortages – Reframed



## The message

As our population ages, we can tap into the innovation and can-do attitude that Americans are known for to address the challenges that come with this changing demographic. The current U.S. housing stock is ill equipped to meet the needs of older people and those with chronic disease or functional limitations. Now is the time to show our resourcefulness to help people thrive and remain rooted in their communities.

By partnering with health service providers to link health care and housing, and matching services and amenities to resident needs, local governments and housing providers can address unmet needs while allowing us to remain in our communities for as long as possible.

# Framing Vulnerability – Reframed



## The message

As our population ages, we can tap into the innovation and can-do attitude that Americans are known for to address the challenges that come with this changing demographic. The current U.S. housing stock is ill equipped to meet the needs of older people and those with chronic disease or functional limitations. Now is the time to show our resourcefulness to help people thrive and remain rooted in their communities.

By partnering with health service providers to link health care and housing, and matching services and amenities to resident needs, local governments and housing providers can address unmet needs while allowing us to remain in our communities for as long as possible.

## What the message does

- Strategies**
  - Prompt the can-do attitude
  - Collective responsibility/benefit
- Solutions**
  - People think of solutions at a systemic level and have a belief that something can be done
- Impact**
  - Policy & systems change

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56



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## Knowledge Increases



## Attitudes Improve



## Policy Support Grows

# When a Frame “works,” It Shifts Thinking in Multiple Ways

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57