



Growing Up and Growing Older: Confronting Ageism Lesson Plan

Introduction

Young people share some of the stereotypes commonly associated with older people. This activity is an effective introduction to units on aging, or may be used in teaching units on prejudice. This is an effective intergenerational activity.

Objectives

Students will:

- identify common stereotypes which younger and older people experience;
- consider ways in which stereotypes lead to forms of age discrimination.

Key Terms

ageism, discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes

Materials

Handout: "Growing Up and Growing Older: Confronting Ageism"

Procedures

1. Define the word ageism - stereotyping and discriminating against people on the basis of age.
2. Introduce handout. Have students complete Section I of the handout individually
3. Divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss their responses according to the directions in Section II.
4. Ask the full class to discuss questions in Section III of the handout.

Extension Activity

Have students take the handout to an older person or to their parents to get a second viewpoint. Students can pool the data and compare responses from the younger and older person.

This activity is adapted with permission from one developed by Fran Pratt, Director of the Center for Understanding Aging, Framingham (MA) State College

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Each of the following statements expresses a stereotype about a group of people defined only as "they." Beside each number, indicate whether you think a younger person is talking about older people (OP) or an older person is talking about young people (YP).

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 because you can't depend on them.
7. They always hang around the parks and shopping malls.
8. They're always so forgetful.
9. I wish I had as much freedom as they have.
10. They should act their age.

Small-Group Discussion: Which of the above statements represent common stereotypes of young people? Of older people? Of both?

Class Discussion: Stereotypes form the basis of prejudice and discrimination. As a teenager or an older adult, have you ever experienced or known anyone who experienced prejudice or discrimination based on age? Possible occasions for age discrimination are when applying for a job, renting an apartment, or trying to participate in an activity intended for 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 can be done about age-based prejudice and discrimination? Do you think this is a problem that older and younger people might work on together?