

Dealing with Ageism: The Last 'Acceptable' Bias

Ageism

Unfair prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age.

By Marc Miller

Founder

CareerPivot

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Dealing with Ageism: The Last ‘Acceptable’ Bias

A [recent case](#) in a Southern California district court shows how complicated the question of ageism can be. A job applicant in her 60s, working at a television station, unsuccessfully applied for four different jobs in her organization. Each of these jobs went to people in their 30s. To demonstrate ageism, the plaintiff showed emails from station leaders saying they wanted to infuse the station newsroom with "innovative," "bold" and "fresh" thinking and were concerned that the newsroom had not "progressed with the times."

In three of the cases, the court ruled against the older employee. For one job, she was not deemed to be more qualified than the person chosen; for a second, she failed to comply with a company policy that would have gotten her an interview; for a third she told the manager she didn't want to work the necessary hours. Only for the fourth did the court allow that she had a legitimate case.

It could be that ageism was at play in all cases, or maybe it wasn't. Many older people have experienced a hiring manager saying they were looking for "new ideas" or "energy" in a moment or a way that sure seemed like a euphemism for "I'm looking for someone who is not old, like you."

Language that hints at bias toward personal attributes would normally be a red flag for the human resources department. But ageism, research shows, is the last acceptable bias. Rejecting someone for being "too old" seems reasonable to a lot of people. The stereotypes around older people are rarely questioned. Older people themselves are sometimes the worst perpetrators. We tend to label ourselves in negative ways and often label younger people in a derogatory way as well.

In reality, age plays a lot less significant a role in someone's ability to work, to innovate, to contribute, than the individual personality and work habits. But the stereotypes often trump reality. And it is frustrating that many of the people who battle the most ardently for inclusion and equity often pointedly exclude older people from that advocacy.

This white paper explores why that is, and what older people can do about it.

Ageism: The Last Acceptable Form of Discrimination

In most cases admitting bias against someone's gender identity, race, ethnicity, body size, hairstyle, neurodivergence, etc., results in some pretty strong social remonstrance. And if your bias causes you to discriminate in the workplace, you're looking at a lawsuit. This is because our society increasingly values empathy and diversity, which is a good thing. But there is one form of bias that people still engage in with impunity: ageism.

Comedians mock older people in a way they would never mock others. They might imply, for example, that all older people are cognitively impaired and that cognitive impairment is funny in old people. Advertisements make fun of older people as being oblivious about technology or social media or just generally out of touch with modern reality. More importantly, employers disregard applications from older candidates, citing reasons like "culture mismatch" and "lack of career runway" that are just euphemisms for "too old."

In an article entitled [Older workers are being nudged out the door: Why is it still OK to be ageist on the job?](#) journalist Richard Eisenberg interviewed one of the authors of a New York University/Stanford Business School study that investigated why people who are ardent opponents of discrimination in most areas had no issues with discriminating against older people. The study, published by the American Psychological Association, was called *Equality for (Almost) All: Egalitarian Advocacy Predicts Lower Endorsement of Sexism and Racism, But Not Ageism*.

The study researcher, Michael S. North of NYU, explained that he became interested in ageism as a young research assistant working on a study about ageing and wisdom. He was charged with interviewing people aged 30s to 80s. He was not looking forward to the interviews with the older people, assuming that they would be boring. He was ageist. It turned out the interviews with the older people actually were the most interesting ones. Moreover, he said, those participants were more interested in him, and more inquisitive about the study than the younger participants.

Years later, North and his colleague conducted the NYU/Stanford study to discover why people who would never want to be xenophobic in any other way were fine with being ageist. They realized that the primary message of racism and sexism is "Stay in your place: boundaries have been constructed around your advancement and society does

not want you to cross those boundaries.” The message of ageism, however, is slightly different. It’s “Get out of the way, you’re blocking younger people’s opportunities.” The argument goes that older folks had their chance and now it’s time for them to step aside and give the younger folks theirs.

It’s not completely different from racism and sexism. Those who espouse this mentality believe what is known as the [Lump of Labor Fallacy](#) that the economy has a finite number of jobs and people have to fight for them. Such people may believe that some people have more of a right to the available jobs than others. This argument has long been used against immigrants, minorities, and women and is now being used against older people. In reality, a thriving economy can support lots of workers and lots of entrepreneurs who create their own opportunities.

For the jobs that are limited, though, there’s a reasonable argument to be made that older people have had their moment of opportunity. Iowa Republican Chuck Grassley, for example, served in Congress nearly 50 years. At 88, the logic goes, he shouldn’t be running again; he should get out of the way.

Should Older People Move Out of the Way in the Workplace?

The expectation that people should gracefully exit the workplace around age 60-65 is a cultural construct that no longer fits the world we live in.

In the past, people retired in their 60s. The 40-and-50-somethings took their place at the top, making room for the 30-somethings to move into management, and the 20-somethings to get the entry level jobs. These days, however, people may stay in their jobs into their 70s and even 80s and 90s, meaning younger people don't have room to advance.

The NYU/Stanford report calls this “opportunity blocking”: the *belief that older individuals actively obstruct more deserving groups from receiving necessary resources and support to get ahead*. The study showed that the younger you are the more you are likely to think older workers should step aside.

A few years ago, I gave a Multigenerational Workplace workshop for the top law firms in Austin, Texas, hosted by a law firm leader in his late 60s who had no plans to retire. When I asked for final thoughts from the participants at the end of the workshop, a lawyer who had been born in the mid-1960s said he wished the older partners would retire to get the “heck” out of the way. This was a classic case of someone perceiving what they thought was opportunity blocking leading to a clear form of ageism.

But a lot has changed since the expectation for retirement by 65 was established. In 1960, the average lifespan was just under 70 years. Also, many companies had pension plans to take care of their employees until they died. You could retire securely, knowing you probably would be provided for for the rest of your days.

By 2020, the average life expectancy was just under 80 years, and corporate pensions were largely a thing of the past. You were expected to save enough to pay for your own retirement—something only a small percentage of the population has ever done. A [recent study](#) showed that the median amount in U.S. retirement accounts is \$65,000, which won't get you very far. It certainly won't cover your living expenses for 15-20

years. Most people don't have enough money to meet their basic needs, much less travel or pursue other leisure activities. They must work.

People also *want* to work. People have been contributing to something besides themselves through their work skills for decades, and they want to continue. Work can provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life that can [stave off many lethal physical ailments and preserve mental cognition](#). Over two million people more than expected retired during COVID; about 1.5 million of those returned to the workplace once the pandemic subsided, according to a May 2022 [Washington Post](#) article.

The surge in retirements occurred after a prolonged period of unemployment according to a [report from the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis](#). These people retired not by choice but out of necessity, because at least through retirement they could have access to some income.

It now appears that a significant portion of these older workers are returning, but to what kinds of jobs?

The article states:

While wage growth for young and mid-career workers is significantly above pre-pandemic levels (from 8.3 and 3.9 percent in February 2020 to 11.4 and 4.4 percent in February 2022, respectively), wage growth for older workers has not exceeded its pre-pandemic peak of 2.6 percent. Low levels of wage growth suggest that the decision to remain retired may not reflect the preferences of many retirees, but rather the lack of demand for their skills and experience. Indeed, given the [low rates of retirement readiness](#) among older workers, one might expect that retirees may “un-retire”. However, many may face countervailing forces in a labor market that has proven [inhospitable to older workers](#)—particularly as employers do not hire older workers.

In other words, people who have skills and experience they want to use in the workforce are being turned away and having to tap into the Social Security system just to survive. Many companies prefer to hire younger people who often receive less pay and are deemed a better long-term investment than older workers.

But is that necessary? Is the economy, as the Lump of Labor Fallacy alleges, a contained system with a limited number of jobs controlled by a finite number of corporate gatekeepers? Actually, that crowded corporate ladder worldview is extremely dated. Evolved companies are trying to focus on helping employees grow and develop as individuals, rather than replicating the dog-eat-dog environment of the past. Employees are often encouraged to pursue continuous learning and branch out from their original skill sets. Companies are experimenting with lots of different types of work arrangements: hybrid work, remote work, job sharing, outsourcing to consultants and

freelancers, empowering digital nomads, and intrapreneurship. Creating your own career mobility has replaced relying on corporate promotions. And many of us who are older have chosen not to even try to vie for roles in the corporate universe, we've just built our own businesses and we're *expanding* the economy.

In this world that supports individual growth and work/life balance, no one should have to "get out of the way".

Instead, we should treat older people the same way we treat any social, racial, religious, gender or ethnic group who is part of the world we live in: inclusively. Learning to understand and collaborating with people from different generations can create new opportunities for everyone. But the first step is facing the fact that ageism is real.

How to Identify Workplace Ageism

Can you identify when ageism in the workplace occurs? Very often ageism is subtle or veiled in language that, on first blush, is acceptable; but after some reflection, you might say, “They said I was too old.”

We had a recruiter at Launch Pad Job Club who told the story of being courted by a major tech employer in the Pacific Northwest. They flew him out to interview for 10 grueling hours. They asked him to stay another day, so that he could interview with one of the key executives.

In that interview, he asked the exec if they had apprehensions about hiring him. The hiring exec said she was not sure he had *the energy for the job*.

He left and soon was on the plane when it hit him – *she said he was too old!*

He was not offered the position.

In my last “job” I was trying to hire a technical trainer who could replace me when I exited—as I was quietly planning to do. I was about to make an offer to a candidate when my boss—who was about 15 years younger than I was--hired someone else, undermining my managerial responsibilities. The gentleman I wanted to hire was about the same age as myself and I was in my mid-50s at the time. My boss told me my chosen candidate *did not have the energy to meet his requirements*.

It hit much later that *he said the candidate was too old*. Had I picked this up immediately I could have thrown the age discrimination card back at him.

[Sherman Law](#) published an article called [11 Ways to Identify Age Discrimination in the Workplace \[+ FAQs\]](#).

Here is their list:

- Facing Harassment Based on Your Age

- Seeing a Pattern of Hiring Only Younger Employees
- Hearing Age-Related Remarks
- Getting Turned Down for a Promotion
- Being Overlooked for Challenging Work Assignments
- Becoming Isolated or Left Out
- Being Encouraged or Forced to Retire
- Experiencing Layoffs
- Having Your Position Eliminated
- Receiving an Employment Improvement Plan
- Facing Unfair Discipline

These are not all necessarily the result of ageism, but they very well could be.

Experiencing harassment

At both of the tech startups where I worked, I was much older than many of my colleagues. At my last “job”, my boss was very immature for his age, and level of experience.

I made a trip to Australia, to teach a week-long series of classes, and I decided to grow a mustache during that time. I decided to keep it very well-trimmed and it was somewhat “old school” in appearance. Even though my hair color had faded a bit from the flaming red I had in my youth, my hair is not gray. Well, my facial hair was very gray. It made me look older, but I was fine with that.

When I walked into a meeting soon after returning, I watched with amazement as my boss and one of my colleagues snickered at my appearance. It was like a couple of grade school kids gossiping in the corner. I remember the event to this day as I found their behavior insulting but ... I did nothing. This was harassment in its most basic form. However, since I was already planning my departure from the company I didn't act.

Unfortunately, harassment, in general, was overlooked at this company. It was a highly toxic work environment. For someone willing to take up the fight, the right course of action would have been to seek legal help. Documentation of the behavior and legal

advice might have been effective to remove the most offensive participants and maybe even change the organizational culture, although that probably was a deeper issue.

For myself, at that point when I knew I wanted to begin a new career on my own, I did not have the motivation to do the work to try to impact the company. I just wanted out.

Seeing a Pattern of Hiring Only Younger Employees

Several members of the [Career Pivot Community](#) have been working on making a pivot into big data. They have some great experience from their past careers that would make them ideal candidates, but they keep getting passed over for recent graduates.

The hiring managers are looking for someone who has textbook knowledge with little experience; they will not look at someone with lots of experience but no textbook knowledge.

Similarly, when I left the corporate world to teach high school math in my late 40s, school districts had no interest in hiring men over 40. (Women over 40 did not have the same problem in this school district). Men over 40 in my teaching certification program could not get interviews. Everyone under 30 had a job before any man over 40 was able to land an interview.

I was able to secure a position only because there was no one else available. By the way, I was a phenomenally good Algebra I and II teacher for two years in an inner-city high school; but I left exhausted, not because of my age but because of the level of trauma of my students and the lack of support in the school system.

Getting Turned Down for a Promotion

The Southern California case I mentioned at the beginning of the paper was an example of a company that was only promoting younger employees. Though the plaintiff had a lot of experience and an excellent performance review, she was being passed over for jobs in favor of younger employees. In one instance, this seemed clear to the court.

I remember having a discussion with a colleague at one of my tech startups. We both had long careers at the same major tech employer. I left when they made major changes to the pension plan, and I no longer trusted that they had my best interest in mind. My colleague stayed on, but his career just stalled.

He was passed over multiple times for a promotion, and he assumed it was ageism, as the person who got the promotion, was always 10-15 years younger.

He cornered his boss one day and asked why he had repetitively been passed over and his boss finally responded:

You do not have enough career runway left.

Another way of saying it is:

You are too old for us to invest in.

The truth is, people leave jobs for all kinds of reasons, so the assumption that hiring a younger person would yield a more lasting investment wasn't accurate. Millennials and GenZ are very big on career mobility. My colleague had no intention of retiring for many more years. He wanted to keep working and more importantly, he wanted to be challenged. He had institutional knowledge and a lot of valuable experience. But he left the following year because he knew ageism was part of the culture there.

Being Encouraged or Forced to Retire

I know many people who have been asked by employers or colleagues, "So what are your retirement plans?" These are people who were in their mid to late 60s and really do not want to retire. This often comes out of the blue and completely out of context. Frequently, this is followed by some form of resource action where they are either laid off or their duties are curtailed.

A few past colleagues were offered a transition to retirement program with no option to say no. For several of my past colleagues, this was actually a good thing as they were consummate workaholics. This was a pathway to stop some of the behaviors that could eventually kill them.

They still wanted to be the ones in charge of their retirement, but that was not one of the options. They could take the transition program or be laid off.

Experiencing Layoffs or Having Your Position Eliminated

In my years as a board member for Launch Pad Job Club, I witnessed instances in which companies would lay off an entire group of employees, only to hire a new group several months later for less money.

Companies have gotten very good at hiding this behavior. IBM has been accused of this behavior. More can be found in the Forbes article [The IBM Age Discrimination Lawsuit Sheds Light On A Harrowing Employment Trend.](#)

If you've experienced discrimination, it's a good idea to seek the advice of a legal expert. I knew someone who had been laid off. Believing ageism was at play, he consulted an attorney. The attorney simply gave him the language he needed to make a complaint that would actually galvanize a response. As a result, he still lost his job, but got a very nice severance package.

Unfortunately, none of this behavior is new. Women and minority groups have had to deal with it all through history. And they have had to fight through the courts and through speaking up. The last few years have made it clear that even though the nation has made a lot of progress, there is still a lot still that needs to be done. Fighting any kind of discrimination is an ongoing process.

My role has been to help workers, many of them older, find new career paths and use existing means to build their networks and their skill sets to stay viable in the workplace.

Ageism Cuts Both Ways

The term “ageism” was coined in 1969 by Robert N. Butler, M.D. founding director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA) of the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Butler wrote several books predicting the kinds of problems that human longevity was likely to create, including the idea that older people and younger people might start competing for turf in the workplace.

But ageism isn't just something that happens to older people. Plenty of younger people have had to battle stereotypes, such as that they are “entitled” and that they “don't know how to work” because of their age.

Some people tend to believe that what was done in the past was “right” way to do things; others think that everything from the past was “wrong” and the current generation has the only “right” idea. This isn't a new social conundrum, but it's the first time so many generations have had to sort these issues out in the workplace.

In many ways we learn to be ageist, because our lives are so stratified by age early on. We start out going to nursery school and then progress through the education system with people the same age as ourselves. We spend much of our first 25 years segregated by age. It is only once we get out of school that we experience peers who are not the same age as ourselves. And then our attitudes toward those of different ages might be shaped by our family relationships, rather than the social construct of collegial respect that guides other diversity measures.

It's important for people of all ages to look honestly at the stereotypes they have of people in other age groups, and the stereotypes they hate about their own age groups, and see if they can start looking at people as individuals rather than labeling them based on their birth dates.

Society's Aversion to Aging

I was honored to interview a leading ageism expert, Becca M. Levy, Director of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Division and an associate professor at the Yale School of Public Health who wrote [Breaking the Age Code: How Your Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long and How Well You Live](#).

Becca Levy's book is based on extensive research on people who live healthy, productive lives well into their 80s, 90s and even over 100 years. She noted that, in places like Japan where older people are revered, they live much longer, more robust lives. Her research showed, that it is *how we view aging*, more than any other factor, that determines not only our mental and emotional states but even our physical strength and health as we age.

She wrote, in her introduction, about an incident in which she witnessed her grandmother falling and injuring herself in a store. The store owner was dismissive, saying "old people fall down" and it wasn't his fault. Levy wrote that her grandmother, normally a force to be reckoned with, receded into a state of helplessness after that encounter, behaving as the feeble person she was accused of being. The next day, her grandmother's energy and positivity rebounded. But Levy had witnessed, firsthand the impact of ageist attitudes on her grandmother's ability to thrive. The research showed that was no fluke. In cultures where age is treated as a failure, older people are much more likely to embrace the idea of themselves as frail, useless, and incapable. Whereas, people who believe, and are reinforced in the belief that aging is a healthy, positive phase of life are much more likely to live it that way.

It's not easy, in the United States, to maintain that positive attitude about aging when most of the culture treats older people as a burden, a nuisance, a joke. The market is glutted with anti-aging products that reinforce the idea we revere youth and see old age as a disease. This used to be a problem for people only over the age of 40 but a 2018 [study showed](#) that we are so terrified of age now that half of young people aged 18-24 want to incorporate anti-aging skin care in their beauty regimens. Ironically, the same group is actually [fond of dying their hair gray](#).

Anti-ageism activist and author Ashton Applewhite notes that a lot of our fears about what it means to get older are false. For example, only about 2.5% of older people live in nursing homes. Only about 10% of 65+ population suffers from any form of dementia, meaning 90% are cognitively fit. In fact, [dementia rates are dropping](#). And in terms of

depression, most people actually are happier toward the ends of their lives than they are in the middle. The main thing to fear about being old is being treated like you no longer have value, just because you're old. As Ashton Applewhite notes: *Aging is not a problem to fix or a disease to cure. Aging is living.*

Ageism toward the old, she notes, has to do with a denial that you will ever be old like the person you are discriminating against. In a sense, we're creating our own nightmare: treating people in a way we desperately fear being treated ourselves one day.

It's the job of those of us in the "older" category to start seeing our own aging differently, and start talking and acting differently about the aging process. If we don't accept the stereotypes, the discrimination, and the limiting definitions society pushes on older people, it will be a lot less comfortable for others to continue trying to keep us in those boxes.

Confronting Ageism in Ourselves

Becoming aware of stereotypes around age and refusing to perpetrate them is a good start for getting rid of ageism in ourselves. Some millennials are entitled; but so are some older people. Some older people lack some skills; but some younger people lack important skills, too. It's not about age, like any *ism* it's about seeing the person instead of your stories about people who look or act like that person.

A good step toward demonstrating a new mindset is to get rid of ageist language. An older person might make excuses for forgetting things by saying it was a 'senior moment' or my favorite that I suffer from 'CRS' (Can't Remember ... Stuff) disease. I think of it as self-deprecating – but what it does is make age an excuse. Ashton Applewhite notes that she didn't call it a *junior moment* when she could not find her car keys as a teenager.

I know I am guilty of promoting ageism in my own language, in my humor, and even how I view life. I have decided to change that and start eliminating ageist language from my own vocabulary.

Have You Stopped Learning?

One assumption about older people is they can't adapt to new tools and approaches to work. An even bigger problem is when older people believe this about themselves. Before COVID, many companies wanted to change their business models through Digital Transformation, to match how the world works with their products—such as selling insurance or real estate via apps. Many couldn't get employees excited about learning the new technologies and processes to make the change. In fact, some [actually fought it](#). But when everyone had to stay at home, keeping business going meant switching to digital approaches. Anyone who wouldn't embrace the new approach was left behind.

Many older people are familiar with the idea that people of a certain age become an "old dog who can't learn new tricks." That attitude may have worked in 1985, but today continuous learning is imperative.

Since the great recession, employers have stopped developing their employees. It is cheaper to hire for the skills you need than train their existing employees. However, it has never been easier or cheaper to stay up to date in most skill sets. Online courses have proliferated and are very affordable.

I suggest the following:

- Plan on attending one industry event each year, even if you have to pay for it.
- Stay up to date with online courses.
- Listen to podcasts.

Network Across Generations

When you go to networking events or social gatherings do you only talk to people in your own age group, or do you connect with people in different generations? If you only talk to people in your age group, then actually *you* are the one being ageist. Networking with younger people, and doing so with respect, not talking down to them or trying to adopt a mentor role you've not been invited to take, is essential to changing your own perspectives on ageism. Obviously, some young people will remind you of yourself before you got the experience you have. But keep in mind that they have skills and perspectives you probably never had.

One of the key points that I make in my multi-generational workplace workshop is: if I want you to listen to me, I have to adapt to you. This is a two-way street where we all have to adapt to one another. Richard Eisenberg [interviewed](#) the authors of a book called *Gentelligence*: a GenXer and two millennials who wrote about the collaborative intelligence that comes from generational diversity. We can all benefit from learning from each other and collaboratively refining our approaches to things.

I am a baby boomer and I like people to talk to me. My son is an old Gen Y or millennial, and I mostly communicate with him via text. My son knows that his mom would prefer for him to call her, and he usually does do that. Many of us have adapted our communications styles with our adult children, but have you done that at work?

What if you have no children? Do you have a good idea of how to communicate with a younger generation that has been connected electronically for at least the last 15 years? If not, you should get some practice.

I gave a presentation to Launch Pad Job Club on Ageism. We discussed how to interact with the younger generations. One gentleman came up to me afterward and told me he volunteered for the Beto O'Rourke for Senate campaign. He said he had worked with a number of talented, young, and passionate volunteers. He was old enough to be their father, but he had had a great experience working with them as peers. His perspective and opinion of the millennial generation had changed dramatically, plus he learned to adapt his communication style to seamlessly fit in with the team of volunteers.

Do you work, socialize, and hang out only with people like yourself? If you do, you are likely going to be ageist because you will form opinions based on secondhand information.

Benefits of a Cross-Generational Network

I hear over and over again about people's networks "aging out". I was working on a brand story with one of the members of the Career Pivot community who told me that new positions always came to her. She never needed to look because her mentors and other leaders were always looking out for her.

What has happened to her in her 60s is her network has aged out. The people who had her back for so many years have either retired, are not in a position of power, or are in the same boat she is in – underemployed or unemployed.

I had a similar discussion with a gentleman who is now in his late 60s. Throughout his career, opportunities just came to him through his network. He never really needed to find work and he did little to cultivate or grow his network as it was feeding him and his family just fine.

That was until he hit his 60s – and his network either retired, became unemployed, was downsized, or passed away. His contacts within his industry greatly diminished. He was forced into retirement and has since formed a consulting group with a few of his former colleagues.

For many of us in the second half of life, our next job will come through a relationship. That relationship may be an existing one, a dormant one that you will reinvigorate (weak ties), or a new relationship.

You should carefully examine your existing relationships or network. How many are of a similar age? How many are much older? Will they still be around to assist you in 10 years?

Another woman I know in her late 50s who is self-employed makes a practice of connecting with younger people, offering advice if they ask it, but making sure to treat them as adults, not "mother" them. These connections have often led to projects. If you are in your 50s today and plan to work until 70 or beyond (yes, that is a large percentage of the 50 somethings) you need to plan on your network to age out.

Zero in on those who are connectors. Connectors are those people who know lots of people and enjoy making connections. If you were let go from your job today, who could

you depend on to help you? Will those same people be in a position to help you in 10-15 years? If not, you need to replace them NOW!

Once you have examined your network and industry, you will want to create a plan to replace and/or augment your existing network. If you need to shift to a different industry, who do you need to develop relationships with? How are you going to garner street cred within that new industry? If you're in a stable industry, who are the 'up and coming' individuals that you need to develop relationships with NOW – such that your network will not age out?

Reversing the Effects of Ageism Starting with You

There will always be people like my immature former boss who will reject people for their age. It's certainly not easy to change a widespread cultural perception. But it is up to us to catalyze that change.

We have to stop attributing so many things to age, to validating the perception that older people aren't productive, adaptable, able to learn and grow with the rapidly evolving digital landscape. We have to stop blaming things on our age. If we're uncomfortable with a technology or a way of communicating, it's our choice to make ourselves comfortable with it, or not. Not everyone our age is uncomfortable with it. If our skills or your clothes are dated, that's a choice. As Ashton Applewhite notes, one of her knees hurts and she has blamed age; but her other knee doesn't hurt and it's the same age.

Like any other ism, we have to start seeing individuals, not races, genders, or ages. If we take a stand against ageism, maybe the rest of the world will start to realize that it's time to do so as well.