

Welcome! By reading *A Kids Book About Ageism* and using this conversation guide, you've joined the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative's movement toward embracing every age, every ability! This book and guide are best read together, grown-up and kids.

a kids book about



AGEISM

Conversation Guide
FOR HOME

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is an initiative of Connecticut Community Care.

Learn more about us at ctagewellcollaborative.org



Connecticut
Age Well
Collaborative™

Let's Get Started!

1. Reflect on your expectations... then suspend them.

- You probably have a reason for reading this book with the kid(s) in your life. Take a moment to reflect on your hopes and expectations. Sometimes our hopes for our kids are rooted in experiences we never got to have, but we still yearn for them to help heal.
- Your goals are important, but try to allow the energy and interests of the kid(s) you're reading with to lead. When grown-ups try to force an outcome or point, kids can quickly lose interest.

2. Pick your reading buddies, time, and place.

- Decide who you want to share this experience with and when. Mealtimes or bedtime work well. Start bedtime routines 30 minutes early to allow time for questions and discussion.
- Ageism can bring up big feelings for grown-ups too, so pick a time when you feel mentally and emotionally ready.

3. Read the book.

- Take your time. Grown-ups often ask kids to hold questions until the end, reading the book aloud without interruption. This one is different!
- Linger on pages, especially when the book or kid asks a question. If you're tempted to rush, consider pre-reading the book.

4. Ask and explore questions.

- Use the prompts to spark conversation, weaving them into the reading experience or after you finished the book. Work your way down the list, pick ones that interest you most, or make up your own along the way!
- The prompts are designed for everyone. Try alternating grown-up and kid(s) asking questions and offering responses.

5. Prioritize understanding over correction.

- If something is said that you disagree with, try responding with an open-ended question to understand further, instead of immediately explaining why they are wrong or misinformed. Refer to the "Helpful Phrases" section for more tips.

5. Tell us how it went!

- We'd love to hear about your conversations! Share your experience with ctagewell@ctcommunitycare.org.



TIPS FOR GREAT CONVERSATIONS

Allow everyone equal chance to speak.

You can even start by giving everyone a moment to answer the question before any back and forth.

Listen to understand, not to respond.

Try to begin with the goal of understanding the other person better, instead of getting your point across.

Share personal views, not generalizations.

Starting sentences with 'I' (I feel, I think) can help avoid comments that oversimplify or try to speak for an entire group.

Close the conversation.

End with one of the closing prompts to get a small sense of resolution before jumping back into daily life.



Conversation Prompts

Opening (before reading the book)

- At what age do you think someone is old?
- What do you think older people look like?
- What kinds of things do you think older people do?

Aging

- How has your mind and body changed as you have aged?
- Have you ever felt excited to age? Have you ever felt scared to age?
- Why is aging important?
- When you become a 'grown-up,' do you think you will still age and grow?

Understanding Ageism

- What stereotypes have you heard about older grown-ups?
- Why do you think ageism is specifically when younger grown-ups act unfairly to older grown-ups?*
- Why do you think society favors younger grown-ups, who then have power to make decisions for older grown-ups (and kids)?

Spotting Ageism

- Who are the older adults in your family or community? How do the younger adults treat them? Are there things the older adults aren't "trusted" or "allowed" to do?*
- Have you ever heard a grown-up say something negative about how they are aging? What did they say? Why do you think they said that?
- Have you ever seen an older adult do something you thought was for younger people? What did they do? Why did you think it was only for younger people?
- Do you see a lot of movies or shows where an older person is the hero? Why or why not?

A New Story to Tell

- Is there something you love to wear or do now that you hope you still wear or do when you are an older adult?
- What words do you hope people use to describe you when you are an older adult?
- What could you do if you hear someone stereotyping older adults?

Closing

- Share one thing you learned about ageism from reading the book.
- What are you looking forward to when you become an older adult?



QUESTIONS FROM OUR KIDS

What's a younger grown-up?

A younger grown-up is someone about 25–55 years old. Sometimes this is called "middle age" because it's in the middle of what most people consider to be a young person or old person.

But kids are treated unfairly, too!

Sometimes they are! **Adultism** is the regular stereotyping and discrimination of young people by adults. Adultism is not when a grown-up makes a rule or decision you don't like in order to keep you, themselves, or anyone else safe and healthy.



Helpful Phrases

If things get tricky, here are a few phrases that might help you keep the conversation going.

When a kid calls you old...

- I *am* older than you! I have lots of candles on my birthday cake. I'm [numeric age] which means I'm also a [younger adult/older adult]. Sometimes that makes me feel [_____]. I'm learning what it means to age, just like you!

When you don't know the answer...

- That's a great question. I don't know the answer. What do you think?
- How do you think we could find this out?
- That's a good question for the authors. Should we send them a message? (Email us at ctagewell@ctcommunitycare.org)

When a kid shares something tough for you to hear...

- I'm so glad you're talking to me about this. That was a really tough situation. Tell me more.
- I'm sorry that happened. How did that make you feel?

When you feel frustrated, embarrassed, or triggered...

- **Three deep breaths**
- That's hard for me to hear. I'm still learning about ageism too.
- I'm sorry. Grown-ups make mistakes too. It's all part of aging and growing.

When a kid doesn't stop asking questions...

- There's a lot to learn about ageism and this book is just a start. Let's both think more about it and talk more another day.



Try not to get defensive (*I'm not old!*) or give an uncomfortable laugh if a kid calls you old.

These types of responses send the message that being old is negative or problematic.



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is working to disrupt ableism just as much as ableism. (Check out our website to learn more about our campaign, *Every Age, Every Ability*.) So why's the book just about ageism? Because our publisher, A Kids Co, already has some other titles in their amazing collection that address ableism, like *A Kids Book About Disability*.

