

◇ Chapter 15  
Relate to Older Adults

Enrichment Activities

## STEREOTYPES AND AGING

*The mind is the first thing to go.  
It's all downhill from here.  
You can't teach an old dog new tricks.  
At 50 I'm definitely over the hill.*

Many people have learned to identify and refrain from using most stereotypes. However, we are not as used to listening for, and self-correcting, stereotypes that refer to age. Jokes commonly contain stereotypes about aging with reference to the physical appearance or disabilities of older adults. Unfortunately, even in jest, these stereotypes are damaging. They destroy the self-image of many older adults and perpetuate our culture's negative attitude toward aging. The first step toward eliminating age stereotypes is awareness.

**Directions:** Enlist the help of family and friends in answering the following questions about age stereotypes.

1. Why do you think it is important to be aware of sayings and figures of speech about aging?

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2. Why do you think people make jokes about aging?

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3. Why do you think it might be important not to reinforce stereotypes about aging?

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4. What do you think has perpetuated negative attitudes toward aging? Explain.

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5. How do attitudes influence how people treat the elderly in our culture?

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# ADULT CARE CAREERS

With the daily news reports of job layoffs and phaseouts, it is refreshing to know that at least one area is expecting job growth in the future. The need for services for older adults is expected to increase, due to longer life spans resulting from healthier lifestyles and medical advances.

## Consumer Product Design

One such area of career expansion is consumer product design. In the past, most products were designed for the typical, able-bodied consumers. The best future designs will be both stylish and more convenient for all groups of people to use. These range from clothes that can be easily fastened to appliances that can be operated effortlessly. There is also a need for homes and vehicles that provide better access to those with disabilities. Also all types of computer-assisted devices will be in greater demand. Developing these products will require people with a variety of creative talents and technical skills.

## Health Care Workers

The demand for doctors and nurses who specialize in the needs of older adults, as well as researchers to continue working on cures for diseases and conditions that affect older people, will increase. Doctors' offices, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and hospitals will all need health care workers to meet future demands.

## Assisted Living Careers

Finally, many jobs will be related to the living arrangements available to older adults. Some elderly people will live independently. Others will live in group homes. Still others will need long-term care facilities. All arrangements will result in a need for

entry-level jobs to assist with tasks such as house-keeping, maintenance, transportation, meal preparation, and recreation. Many will need health and personal care service workers as well.

How can you know if an elder-care career is for you? Ask yourself:

- Am I genuinely interested in older adults and their needs?
- Am I patient with others who may be slow and need assistance?
- Can I appreciate the differences among people?
- Do I have a high energy level and a good sense of humor?
- Am I a good listener?
- Is my outlook on life generally positive?
- Am I sensitive to the needs of others?

Answering "yes" to these questions may mean that you are the right person to pursue a career in adult care. It is a field that offers not only opportunities for advancement, but also the increased self-worth that comes from helping others.

### Focus In

Visit a nursing home or other long-term living or assisted-care facility in your community. Then use what you have learned and observed to design a new concept for "assisted living" that you think would appeal to older adults. Include sketches as well as written descriptions. What makes the environment you designed different from those you saw?