

YOUNG AND OLD: In My Opinion

How do you feel about older people? Do you respect them for their experience and knowledge or do you think they're out of touch and just in the way? How do you feel about watching your parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles growing older? Have you ever considered that you're a part of the aging process?

Inevitably, we must all grow old; and, as we do, we must deal with the aging process each in our own way. As we mature, relationships change; friends die; children establish their own families.

Listed are twenty statements about aging, death, and relationships. Indicate how you feel about these topics by putting a check in the appropriate column.

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel sorry for the elderly.					
I have many friends who will be my friends forever.					
I want to live to be very old.					
It's important to maintain good relations with your family throughout your life.					
Young people and the elderly have nothing in common.					
Old people cannot remember what you tell them.					
As they grow older, children get along better with their parents.					
If I were mentally or physically disabled by old age, I would want to die.					
My parents don't think of me as a young adult.					
Our society should have more respect for the wisdom of its older citizens.					
Women age better than men.					
Old people don't enjoy life as much as young people do.					
We are a youth-oriented society.					
The elderly have nothing to contribute to society.					
Adults should visit their parents often.					
I am close to my grandparents and other older adults.					
Retired people don't want to work.					
When people stay married for 30 or 40 years, it must be because they see no alternatives.					
Children are closer to their mothers than to their fathers.					
The elderly are preoccupied with death.					

STATEMENT: In general, what is your overall opinion of aging and the elderly? Is it something you look forward to in your own life?

SIMULATION: Being Old

Directions: As your group completes each station, answer the questions shown under REACTION that correspond to the number station you are working at. Each person in your group must complete each activity, according to the directions at each station. Before you move to the next station complete the questions.

STATION 1 SIGHT

Information: One-third of those 65 or older report that an inability to see well prevented them from doing things they wanted to do. Cataracts, glaucoma, loss of central vision, yellowing of lens of the eye-filtering blues, sensitivity to glare, and the need for more light are common.

Reaction: What were your feelings as you tried to complete threading the needle?
What safety problems in everyday living might exist because of the sight limitations of aging?

STATION 2 HEARING

Information: Thirty to fifty percent of older adults have a hearing loss that affects their communication with others. Loss of the ability to hear sounds of low and high frequency narrows the hearing range. Consonants (s, f, p, th) become more difficult to hear.

Reaction: Why might a hearing loss cause isolation, anxiety, and/or depression in an older person?
Why might more men have hearing loss than women?
What safety problems might exist because of a hearing loss?

STATION 3 TASTE

Information: Fifty percent of taste buds are lost by age 65. Taste is not usually affected until the late 70's when the ability to taste sweet and salty foods diminishes.

Reaction: What did the foods taste like to you?
What health problems might be caused by "compensation" for loss of taste?

STATION 4 SMELL

Information: Over 40% of people 80 or older have difficulty identifying common substances by smell. Loss of ability to smell affects the ability to taste.

Reaction: How could loss of smell cause nutritional problems?
How could loss of smell cause hygiene problems?
What safety risks are possible because of the reduced ability to smell?

STATION 5 MOBILITY/DEXTERITY

Information: Forty percent of people over 65 experience limitations in activity. Bone and muscle changes as well as other health conditions (arthritis, stroke, Parkinson's disease) contribute to loss of dexterity and mobility.

Reaction: In addition to the frustration felt and the difficulty with moving, what will the elderly feel that you did not feel?
How would being confined to a wheel chair or dependency on a cane or walker limit your activities?
What did you find hardest about this experience, tying the small shoe or picking up the buttons?
Why?

STATION 6 TOUCH

Information: Pain threshold decreases with age. Ability to distinguish between textures and objects becomes more difficult.

Reaction: What were your reactions to being unable to feel and distinguish the textures and objects?
What safety problems might be caused by a lessened sense of touch and a lowered threshold of pain?

SUMMARY: Explain how the experiences have affected your attitude about the following statements:
Older people are often thought of as physically and/or mentally impaired.
With a knowledge of the effects of aging, one can compensate for the process of aging.

Setting Up The Stations

STATION 1 SIGHT

Directions: While wearing the glasses provided, thread a needle.

Materials needed: Glasses smeared with petroleum jelly, small-eyed needle, thread, and scissors.

STATION 2 HEARING

Directions: While wearing earphones, listen to a group member read the provided short newspaper article.

Materials needed: Earphone, short newspaper/magazine article, to be read using a normal voice.

STATION 3 TASTE

Directions: Eat and drink the food provided.

Materials needed: Unsalted crackers, Kool-Aid without sugar, water, pitcher, cups and napkins.

STATION 4 SMELL

Directions: Close your eyes and pinch your nose. Attempt to identify the items in each jar.

Materials needed: Six small containers or spices such as cloves, cinnamon, vanilla, etc.

STATION 5 MOBILITY/DEXTERITY

Directions: Wrap your knees with the elastic bandages and bind together your thumb and index finger, on each hand, with masking tape. Put on the plastic gloves provided and try to tie the laces on the small shoe into a bow. With your fingers still wrapped with the masking tape, wearing plastic gloves and your knees wrapped with the elastic bandages, bend down to pick up the small buttons from the floor.

Materials needed: Masking tape, two pairs of plastic gloves, two elastic bandages, small shoe with laces and 3 small buttons.

STATION 6 TOUCH

Directions: While blindfolded and wearing the rubber gloves, identify the textures and objects provided. Remember the elderly would not be blindfolded. You are wearing a blindfold so you cannot see the objects.

Materials needed: Rubber gloves, blindfold, textures such as glass, satin, paper, and wood.

AGING QUESTIONS

What are some reasons that might explain why the elderly have lost their traditional roles in the family?

What has caused our society to forget about its old people?

It has been said that: "Maybe the real reason old people are shut away here to die is that we can't stand the thought of our own old age." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

Discuss the term "Hypochondria." Why do some old people seem inclined to become hypochondriacs?

How can grandparents make valuable contributions to the family?

How can old people help the young?

Should old people be encouraged to live with their married children? Why or why not?

Should young people think about their old age? Why or why not?

What are some of the ways in which you can prepare for old age?

What are some examples of the emphasis Americans place on staying young?

How does the emphasis on youth affect old people?

How does this emphasis affect young people's attitudes toward old people?

Why do many people seem to think that the elderly do not possess the same needs and feelings as the middle-aged or the young?