



**WELCOME**  
to today's webinar



CULTURE CHANGE  
in **ACTION**  
**WEBINARS**

*Sharing the Vision*

AUGUST 15, 2019

**A Cruel Irony: Ageism and  
Ableism in Senior Living  
Environments**

Guide: Jill Vitale-Aussem



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**A Cruel Irony:**  
Ageism and Ableism in Senior Living Environments



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**Change starts here.**



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**Prejudice against our feared future self**



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**Prejudice or discrimination against someone who is living with different cognitive or physical abilities**



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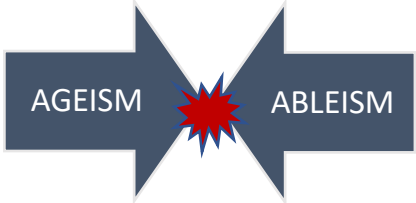
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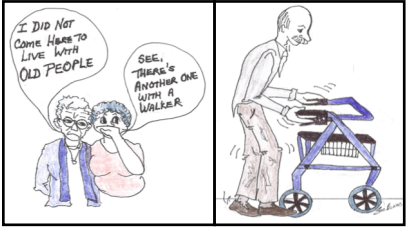
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A two-panel comic strip. In the first panel, two people are talking. One says, "I DID NOT COME HERE TO LIVE WITH OLD PEOPLE". The other replies, "SEE, THERE'S ANOTHER ONE WITH A WALKER". In the second panel, an elderly man is pushing a walker.

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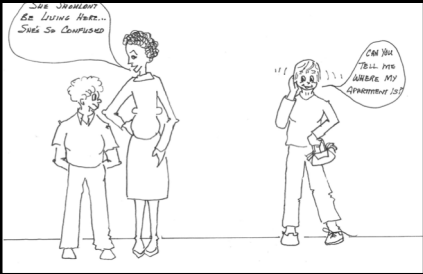
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A two-panel comic strip. In the first panel, a man and a woman are talking. The man says, "SHE'S DEMENTED! SHE'S SO CONFUSED". The woman replies, "SHE'S DEMENTED! SHE'S SO CONFUSED". In the second panel, the man is talking to himself, saying, "OH MY GOD! TELL ME! UNRAVE MY DEMENTED-ITY!"

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A two-panel comic strip. In the first panel, a man and a woman are sitting on a bench. The man says, "SHE'S DEMENTED! SHE'S SO CONFUSED". The woman replies, "SHE'S DEMENTED! SHE'S SO CONFUSED". In the second panel, the man is talking to himself, saying, "OH MY GOD! TELL ME! UNRAVE MY DEMENTED-ITY!"

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## The LIVING CENTER and....



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"They (the other residents) seem to be looking at me, but they are really looking over me."  
-Helen



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"I go where I want and do what I want. They (the IL residents) don't like it and that's tough... I am a person and I have a right to go wherever I want. I have wheels and they have legs, but we are all the same."  
-Sally



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"I am shy about who I eat with because I can't use my fork and spoon. I sometimes choose to eat alone because I know eating with my hands can be upsetting to some."  
-Patricia



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"Other communities wanted to be a showcase where only youthful, healthy seniors were displayed. People wracked by the tremors of Parkinson's, debilitated by dementia, or simply gnarled by age were made to feel they were an embarrassment—beings unfit to be seen in public."  
-Donna, family member



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### The New York Times

- Tables Reserved for the Healthiest
- Mean Girls in the Retirement Community
- An Unexpected Bingo Call: You Can't Play



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It's working exactly the way we  
set it up to work.



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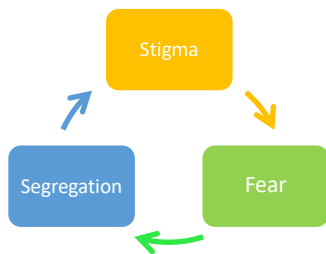
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We can't fight ageism without addressing ableism



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THE IMPACT



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ISOLATION


There is a  
**45%**  
increased risk of  
mortality


in seniors  
who report  
**feeling  
lonely**




**15**  
times as  
many  
cigarettes  
a day

Loneliness is more dangerous than  
**obesity** and as damaging to health  
as **smoking** 15 cigarettes a day.



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A Call to Action

"Help us to trust that we will continue to be accepted even when our hands and words stop working. Help us believe that our friends will always be our friends."  
-Patricia

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WHAT WE PERMIT  
WE PROMOTE

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FOCUS ON COMMUNITY BUILDING

Citizens vs. Consumers

The Leader's Role



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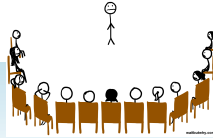
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### ALL CHANGE IS LINGUISTIC

- It's not about a new policy
- Community learning
- The leader's job isn't to have the right answers but to ask the right questions
- Goal is shared commitment to creating a new reality



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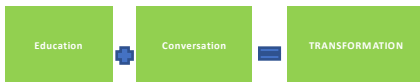
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### A POWERFUL FORMULA



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### CREATE NORMS OF INCLUSIVITY



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## Inclusivity Assessment

- Have we educated residents and team members about ageism and ableism?
- How do we refer to different levels of living and people who need supportive services? (through the double doors, third floor, down the hill, dementia resident, independent living, etc)
- Do we have policies and practices that unwittingly encourage segregation and ostracism?
- Does our use of common area spaces encourage or discourage inclusivity?
- Is there a noticeable difference in décor/maintenance of different levels of living?
- Are there norms of inclusion in place?
- What messages are we sending through our marketing & advertising?
  - Are we focusing on "super agers"?
  - Do we educate about inclusivity during tours?



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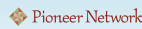
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## Learning Circle Questions

- What kind of community do we want to be? How do we want the people to live here to feel?
- Do you address ageist/ableist messages and conversations when you encounter them? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been treated differently because of your age or different abilities (dementia, assistive devices, etc)? What happened and how did it make you feel?
- Have you ever been discriminated against, ostracized or "left out" of a group? What happened and how did it make you feel?
- In your past, have you worked with others to include and honor others living with different abilities?
- Ageism & ableism are impacting me and others in my community in this way...



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# QUESTIONS

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*Hot Topics Series Webinars*  
**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019**  
*Growing Person-Centeredness*

**Watch-list Huddling:  
 A High-engagement Proactive  
 Quality Practice**

**Guides:**  
 Lynn Snow, Research Clinical Psychologist, Research and  
 Development Service of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center  
 Christine Hartmann, Supervisory Research Health Scientist,  
 Bedford VA Medical Center

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