



# Reframing Aging: A Primer for Health Care Professionals

# Reframing Aging



A Social Change Endeavor  
designed to improve the  
public's understanding of aging

@ReframingAging

*Original research conducted by the  
FrameWorks Institute and sponsored by the  
Leaders of Aging Organizations*



## Leaders of Aging Organizations (LAO)



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## Today's Presenters

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- **Helen Fernandez, MD**, Professor of Geriatrics, Palliative Medicine, and Medical Education, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai



## Reframing Aging: A Primer for Healthcare Professionals

Moira O'Neil, PhD  
Vice President of Research Interpretation

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## FrameWorks is on a mission...

to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity  
to **frame the public discourse** on social and scientific issues

**framing =**

choices in how we present information



how people think/feel/act

**framing (really)  
matters right now**

**Healthcare professionals are heroes and framers**



Communicating for individual behavior  
change

vs.

Framing for policy and systems change

Given the **importance of free speech**, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?



*85% in Favor*

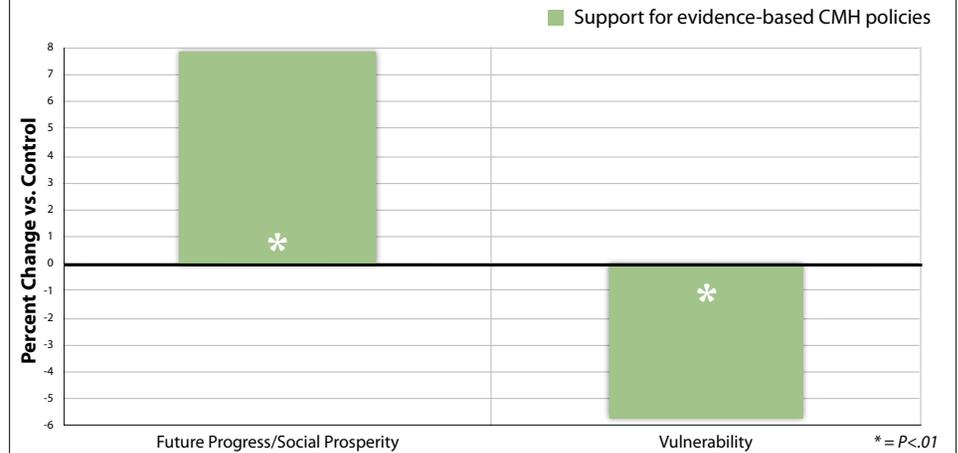
Given the **risk of violence**, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?



*40% in Favor*

*Sniderman & Theriault, 2004*

## Framing children's issues



## You Say...They Think

AAA

BBB

  
Healthcare Professional

  
Non-expert

4 ideas for framing ageism now

**Framing challenge: people think health outcomes are only about individual choices.**

**#1**

**Carefully attend to attribution of responsibility**

## What to do

- tell systems stories
- leave no space in communications for people to blame marginalized groups instead of inequitable systems

### **Attend to attribution of responsibility.**

#### **Before**

The higher number of deaths among older Black people and Latinos can be explained by the higher number of underlying health conditions, like obesity and diabetes.

#### **After**

When thinking about higher number of deaths among older Black people and Latinos, we need to think about why people get sick in the first place. Who still has to leave their home to work, who has to leave a crowded apartment, get on crowded transport, and go to a crowded workplace? The privilege of working from home is not available to everyone.

**Framing challenge: right now people only hear about older people's vulnerability.**

**#2**

**Tell other stories about older people's experiences during the pandemic.**

**Tell other stories about older people and the pandemic.**

States such as New York and Florida issued calls for retired medical professionals to return to work, and tens of thousands volunteered to do so. Likewise, many older people are caregivers for family members who are frail, disabled, or cognitively impaired.

**Framing challenge: people are fatalistic about health outcomes for older people.**

**#3**

find balance between urgency and efficacy

all urgency



fatalism  
disengagement

all efficacy



message rejection  
lack of motivation

balance



perceived agency  
engagement  
action

### **Balance urgency and efficacy.**

#### **Before**

Nursing home populations are at a high risk of being infected by — and dying from — the coronavirus. Covid-19 is known to be particularly lethal to adults in their 60s. And it spreads through facilities, where many people live in a confined environment and workers move from room to room.

#### **After**

Nursing home populations are at a high risk of being infected by — and dying from — the coronavirus. Covid-19 is known to be particularly lethal to adults in their 60s. A strong infection prevention and control program, however, can protect residents and healthcare personnel.

**Framing challenge: people dismiss ageism as a serious issue.**

## #4

Talk about intersectionality instead of comparing “isms.”

**Talk about intersectionality instead of comparing “isms.”**

**Before**

Ageism in healthcare settings during the pandemic is just as bad as sexism and racism. We need to combat ageism just like we do other isms.

**After**

Older people are diverse in many ways including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Addressing marginalization and discrimination in the pandemic must focus on these sources of inequity as well as age.

## How do I learn more?

Visit the GSA’s *Reframing Aging Initiative*’s website:

[www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)

Sign up for FrameWorks’ Newsletter *On Frame*:



Thank you!

Let’s continue the conversation.

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**Helen Fernandez, MD, MPH**



# Questions

## Resources

### Response to Covid-19 Webinar Series

Available at [www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)

- **Reframing Aging: A Primer for Health Care Professionals** (August 12)
- **Reframing the Response to COVID-19: Applying Reframed Language to Counteract Ageism** (April 21)

### Caravan, the newsletter of the Reframing Aging Initiative



To subscribe, write to [reframingaging@geron.org](mailto:reframingaging@geron.org)

## What can I do?

Practice using the tips on the Quick Start Guide

Learn about the Swamp of Public Opinion on Aging and other research on the Reframing Aging Initiative webpage ([www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org))

Take the Implicit Association Test to measure your implicit bias (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>)

Call out ageism when you see it or hear it

Request a workshop or presentation for your organization

[www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)

