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What's in a Name?

An Example of a City Commission on Aging

WHAT ARE THE
everyday ways you can
address ageist language in
your work?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN
to "Age Strong" in your
community?

WHO ARE THE
allies and partners that are
likely to support a change
in the conversation about
aging?

HOW CAN THE TOOLS
from the National Center
to Reframe Aging help you
to change the way you talk
about aging?

Emily Shea, Commissioner of Boston's Age Strong Commission, knows the power of words. Her commitment to reframing aging began with rebranding the Commission on the Affairs of the Elderly, a name that did not resonate with Boston's older population. After years of consideration and internal conversations with city employees, Emily and her team settled on the name "Age Strong" to reflect a more positive, empowering message about aging.

The rebranding involved extensive community engagement, including surveys that revealed "strong" and "experienced" as the words older Bostonians identified with. With a new name, the Age Strong Commission launched campaigns to change the

conversation about aging, featuring diverse older people in public awareness efforts. They even rebranded Boston's shuttle service for residents ages 60+ as one that transports "Boston's most experienced people."

Emily acknowledges the collaboration required to make this transformation possible, with support from city staff, partners like the Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and even Boston's mayor. While Age Strong is now widely used, the official name change awaits City Council approval. In 2024, Emily remains committed to continuing this work, supported by new staff and the resources of the National Center to Reframe Aging, ensuring more Bostonians benefit from the movement to Age Strong.

JOIN US IN TELLING A NEW STORY ABOUT AGING!

What Can I Do?



Practice using the tips on the Quick Start Guide



Partner with the National Center, connect with us at reframingaging@geron.org



Subscribe to *Caravan*, the newsletter of the National Center to Reframe Aging



Access tools and resources via our Learning center at <https://learning.reframingaging.org/>



Quick Start Guide

Our Words Matter

Here Are Tips on How to Choose Them Well

Instead of these words and cues:	Try:
"Tidal wave," "tsunami," and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people	Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: "As Americans live longer and healthier lives..."
"Choice," "planning," "control," and other individual determinants of aging outcomes	Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: "Let's find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age."
"Seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "othering" terms that stoke stereotypes	Using more neutral ("older people/Americans") and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms
"Struggle," "battle," "fight" and similar conflict oriented words to describe aging experiences	The Building Momentum metaphor: "Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities."
Using the word "ageism" without explanation	Defining ageism: "Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes."
Making generic appeals to the need to "do something" about aging	Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions

Learn more at www.reframingaging.org