About “ageism”  
By Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

Ageism is not a term in current use. Like other “isms” it connotes some kind of prejudice. And since we are reluctant to admit prejudice against any group of people, it may be difficult to consciously reflect on this kind of prejudice.

One place to start thinking about ageism is with ourselves, particularly how we talk about our aging selves (something that is with us from birth to death). The attitudes we have developed about people 50 and older are mainly due to what we have learned from the world around us. Have you noticed how we describe times when we forget something as “senior moments” instead of just “forgetfulness”? Have you ever declined an invitation to join a center or group because you don’t want be around “old people”?

Ageism can creep into the limits we set on ourselves … instead of, “I wouldn’t wear that at my age,” it’s much better to think, “What am I comfortable wearing or what do I like to wear?” Beware of following well-meaning people who advise you to “dress your age.”

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If you have arthritis or another condition affecting your knee, you and your doctor may have decided that knee replacement surgery is your best treatment option. Like many people, you may find the prospect of surgery a little unnerving. But you can take heart: Joint replacement surgery is a common procedure; more than 600,000 Americans have a knee replaced each year.* And many patients report that their only regret is not having done it sooner.

You play a vital role on your health care team, and steps you take before and after your surgery can help determine the success of your treatment. Use these checklists to get ready.

PREPARE YOUR MIND
Learning all you can about the procedure and what to expect before, during and after surgery can help you feel more prepared.

- Ask your surgeon to explain what kind of prosthesis (artificial joint) you will receive and how it will be put in place. Find out how long it’s expected to last and what you can do to keep it working well.
- Ask how long you can expect to be in the hospital, when you may be able to return to normal activities and what kind of rehabilitation you will need.
- Discuss options for anesthesia with your surgeon and anesthesiologist. Find out how your pain will be managed following the surgery.

PREPARE YOUR BODY
Getting in shape in the weeks leading up to your surgery can help reduce the risk of complications and shorten your recovery time.

- Exercise. Ask your doctor about exercises you can do before surgery to help maintain the strength of your leg muscles. Strengthening your upper body will make it easier to use crutches or a walker during your recovery.
- If you smoke, quit — or at least cut down. Smoking slows healing and recovery. Your doctor can recommend tools to help you quit.
- Watch your diet and your waistline. Losing excess weight will relieve stress on your new joint. Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet.
- Visit the dentist. An infection in your new joint can occur if bacteria enter the bloodstream somewhere else in your body, such as from a dental procedure. Therefore, you should arrange to have dental work completed before your surgery.

PREPARE YOUR HOME
Making a few modifications around your home can help keep you safe during your recovery.
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So, society doesn’t help either. Notice ageist jokes on commercial television. Maybe there is something funny about making fun of ourselves now — or laughing at our future selves. There is often a limited selection of clothes to choose from because many women’s clothing stores cater to the under 30s. And have you ever wanted to leave a store just because the modern music being played is incomprehensible? Sometimes young people excuse themselves from family gatherings so they aren’t obliged to converse with aunties and grandmas in their 60s and 70s. These are just a few examples. You probably have some of your own.

This past February, the Radical Age Movement, co-founded by Alice Miller, MSW, held a four-hour workshop facilitated by Steve Burghardt on ageism. The 60 participants had a lot of stories and questions about their experiences of ageism in their lives.

There was discussion on how to confront ageism. They included:

• Call out ageism whenever you see it, among family, friends, the media, marketing, etc.
• Be proud of what you are and “come out” as your true age … no apologies.
• Develop non-alienating responses you can give when confronted with ageism.
• Examine your own ageist tendencies … be aware of your own thoughts about yourself.
• Develop a public media campaign by communicating your displeasure about ageist portrayals you find offensive.

We have our work cut out for us, and it begins with us.
Summer Fest 2015 is an annual celebration for residents. This year we celebrated the founding of Isabella 140 years ago. The inspiration for Isabella was a young woman named Isabella Uhl. Upon seeing the hardships endured by elderly people who didn’t have family or government support to assist them, Isabella envisioned a home where sick elderly people could get the care they needed. Isabella died when she was 27 years old. But her parents, Anna and Oswald Ottendorfer, made her dream a reality by establishing the Isabella Home. This year’s Summer Fest was a day of remembrance and fun. The day opened with a fashion show and continued with Children’s Play in the Garden. As always, they shared their special joy with residents. A Poetry Pause featured original readings and recitations of classical poetry by residents, family members and Summer Youth students.

Games entertained the resident neighborhoods, and ice cream floats and treats refreshed all. Residents enjoyed playing Group Trivia (focused on the old days), a “Name That Tune” trivia sheet and “Music Through the Years.” These favorites made a fun-filled day for everyone.

There were ongoing exhibits consisting of a Mini Memorabilia Museum, A Walk through Time and a Pop-Up Design Mini Shop jogging “I remember when ...” memories.

It seems as though the spirit of the young woman Isabella has always been here. Throughout the home, one could see picture displays of the early days up to the present. There was a kaleidoscope of pictures and staff quotes describing how things used to be — and are now — and the consistency in caring was amazing to see.

Isabella endures; residents change, staff change, the physical space changes, yet somehow human caring and compassion continue to be the hallmark of Isabella. It is the spirit that Isabella Uhl first displayed so many years ago. Even as our organization has grown over the years, the solid foundation set by Isabella Uhl and her parents remains. Isabella Uhl would indeed be proud to see who we are today.