

Maine Wisdom Summit Aging Well Through COVID Reframing Aging: A Generation's Work

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Question 1

I have experienced ageism in interpersonal interactions.

Yes

No

Ageism is....

- Discrimination against persons of a certain age group, especially older adults
- Tendency to regard older persons as debilitated, unworthy of attention, or unsuitable for employment

Implicit ageism:

subconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors one has about older or younger people, generally negative

External and internal ageism:

perpetuated by others; perpetuated by the self

Experiences with everyday ageism

AMONG ADULTS AGE 50–80

82%

Experienced one or more forms of everyday ageism in their day-to-day lives



65%

Exposure to ageist messages

45%

Ageism in interpersonal interactions

36%

Internalized ageism

*Note: Percentages reflect responses of either often/sometimes or strongly agree/agree to forms of ageism.

Ageism's Impact on Health

Unfavorable Stereotypes in older adults

- chronic stressor in the lives of older adults
- lower self-perceptions of aging, impacting behavior & health

Negative age attitudes and beliefs

- predict worse cognitive performance
- predict the development of Alzheimer's disease biomarkers

17.04 million cases of the 8 most expensive health conditions in one year attributable to ageism.

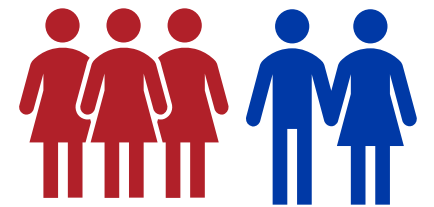
- Highest in cardiovascular disease due to heightened cardiovascular stress (The Gerontologist, 2018)
- \$63 billion spent on health care
- \$1 in every \$7 spent (The Gerontologist, 2015)

Ageism & Age Discrimination

- One in 17 adults over age 50 experience frequent healthcare discrimination, and this is associated with new or worsened disability by 4 years (Journal of General Internal Medicine, 2015)
- About three in five older workers (61%) have either seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace despite 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act. (AARP, 2018)

The Good News

- Positive self-perception leads to 7.5 years longer, healthier lifespan (The Gerontologist, 2015)
- Older persons with positive age beliefs who carry one of the strongest factors for developing dementia were nearly 50% less likely to develop the disease than their peers who held negative beliefs. (PLOS ONE)



Question 2

Research shows that exposure to an explanation of implicit bias perpetuates ageism

True

False



**NATIONAL POLL ON
HEALTHY AGING**
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Positive views on aging

AMONG ADULTS AGE 50–80

88%

Feel more comfortable being themselves

80%

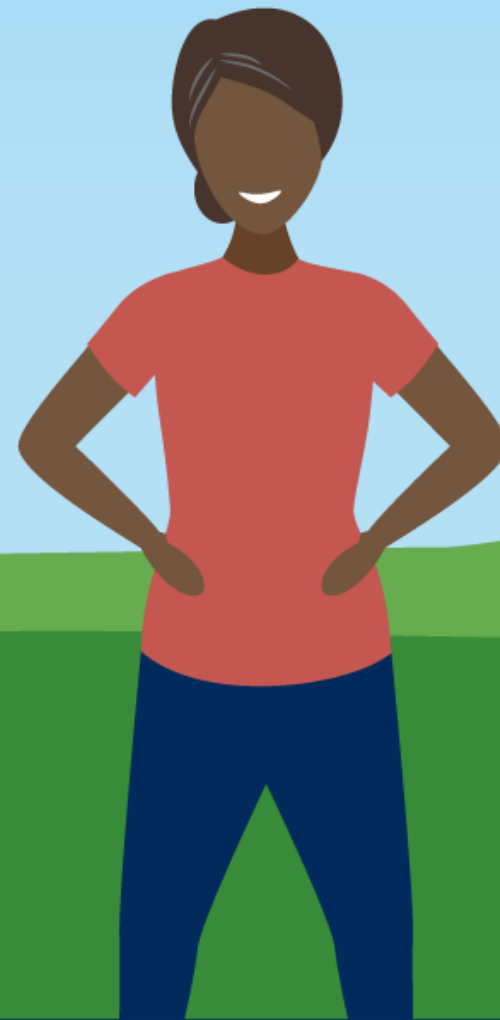
Have a strong sense of purpose

67%

Feel more positive about aging

65%

Think their life is better than they thought it would be



Learn more: www.healthyagingpoll.org | **Contact us:** healthyaging@umich.edu

More Good News

[Reframing Aging: Effect of a Short-Term Framing Intervention on Implicit Measures of Age Bias](#) (*The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 25 June 2018)

- **reframing** messages about aging can decrease implicit bias against older adults
- highlights ways for communicators to promote a positive understanding of the aging process, thereby mitigating sources of implicit prejudice.

[Interventions to Reduce Ageism against Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#) (*American Journal of Public Health*, Aug 2019, Vol. 109, No.8)

- interventions are associated with substantial reduction in ageism
- should be part of an international strategy to improve perceptions of older people and the aging process

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*



Why Reframe?

Changes in Communication lead to



Changes in Discourse lead to



Changes in Thinking lead to



Changes in Behavior lead to



Changes in Policy and Practice

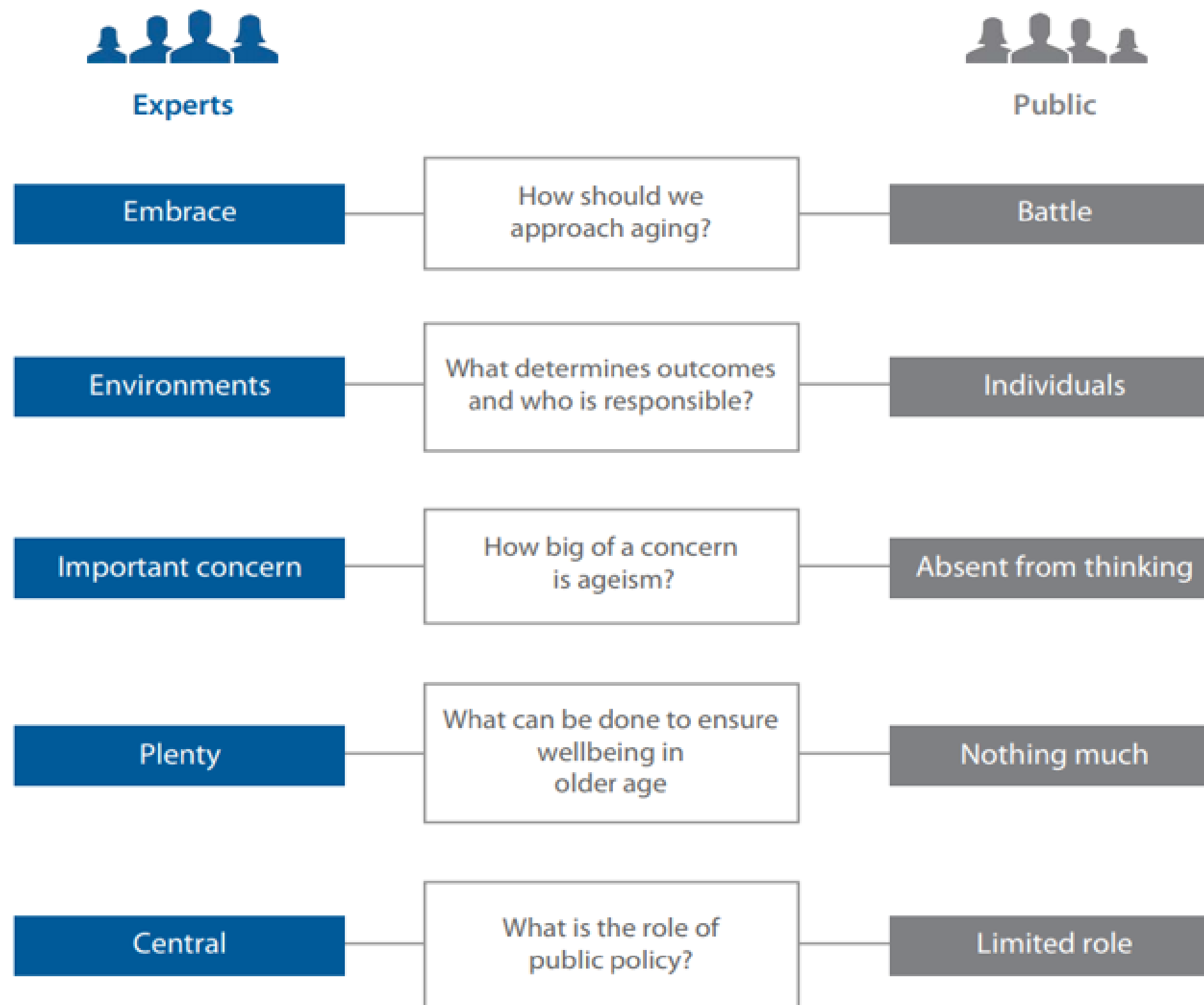
Research Identified the Challenge

Public Perceptions about older people that are incomplete and unrealistic: older people are either living a life of leisure or are frail, decrepit, and dependent.

Ageism is not considered a “problem.” For ex., the Age Discrimination in Employment Act that prohibits workplace discrimination should take care of this.

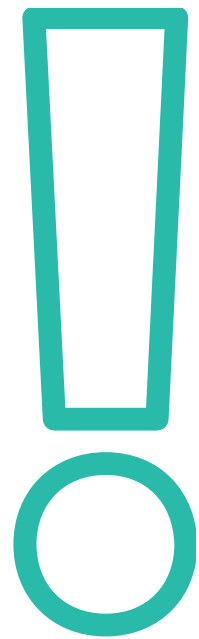
Cultural Models are cognitive short cuts that we rely on to interpret and understand all sorts of experiences, thoughts and feelings. They are taken-for-granted and largely automatic assumptions.

Mapping the Gaps



Framing Is about Choices

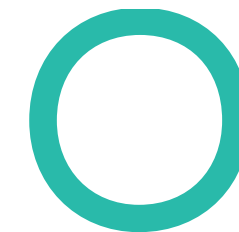
Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented:



What to emphasize



How to explain it



What to leave
unsaid

When a Frame “Works,” It Shifts Thinking in Multiple Ways



Knowledge

Public policy shapes how successfully people age.



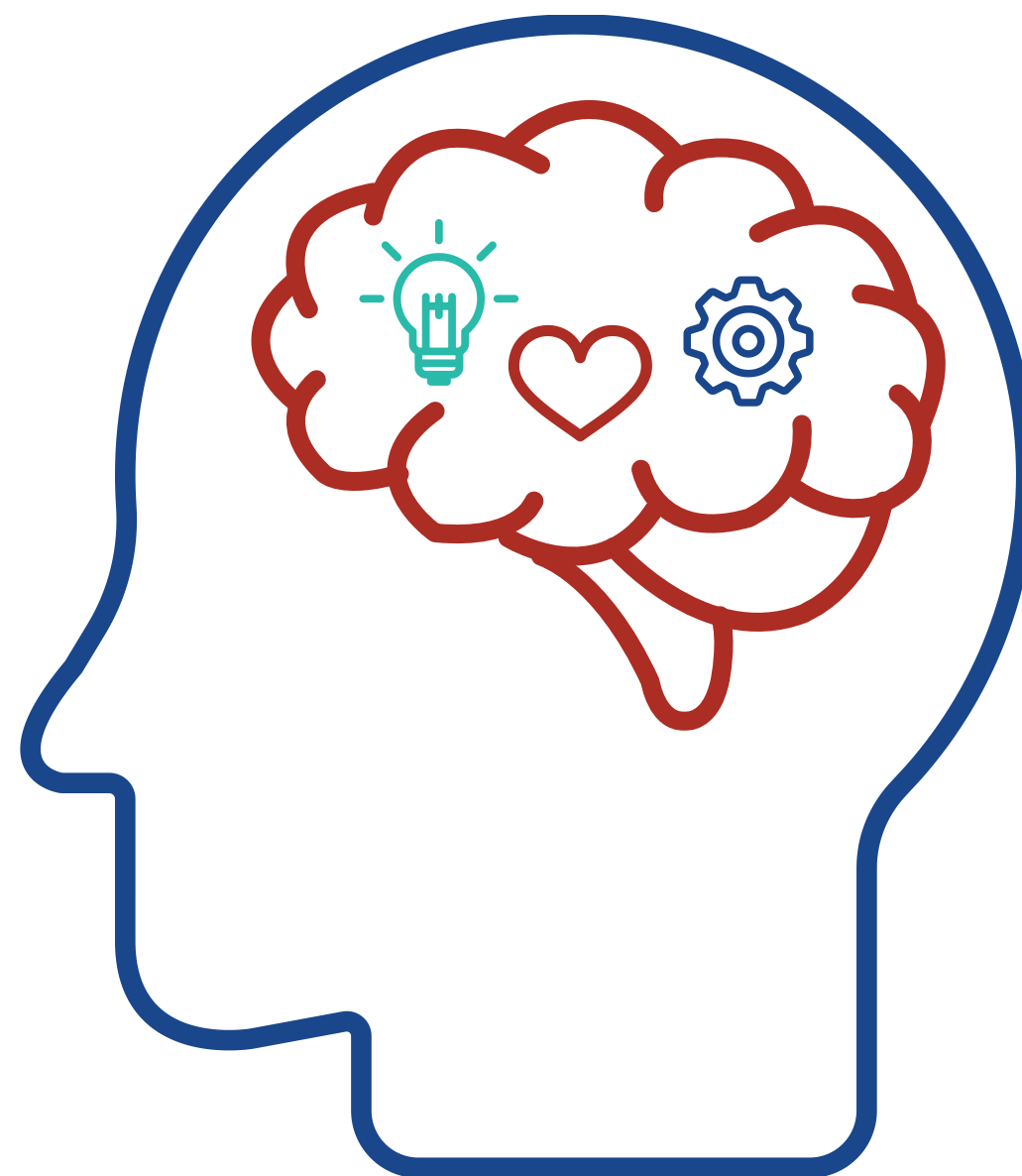
Attitudes

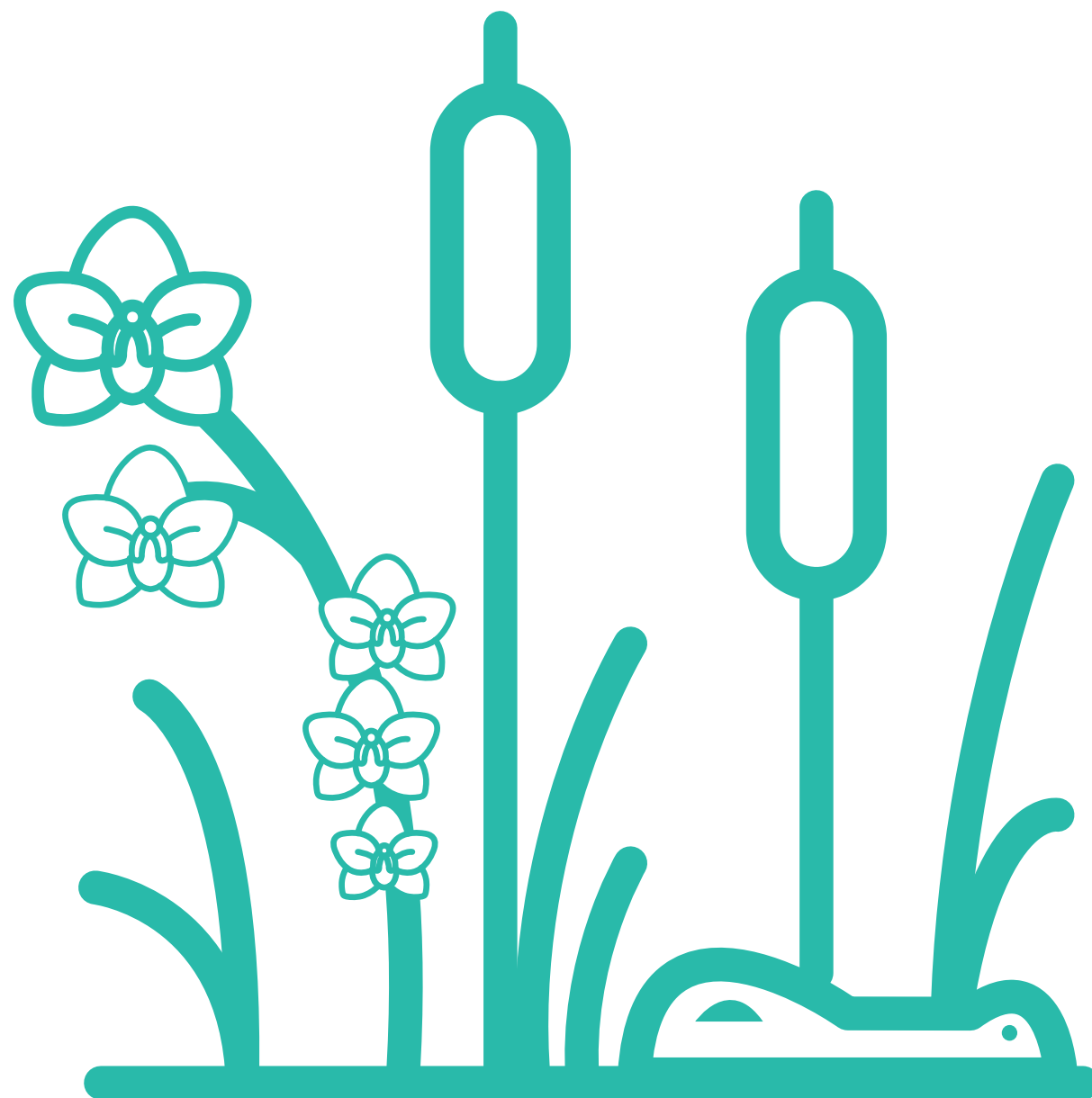
We should increase funding for aging research and age-friendly public policy.



Policy Support

We need age-friendly employment policies that benefit older people and family members who might care for them.





The Swamp of Public Thinking about Aging

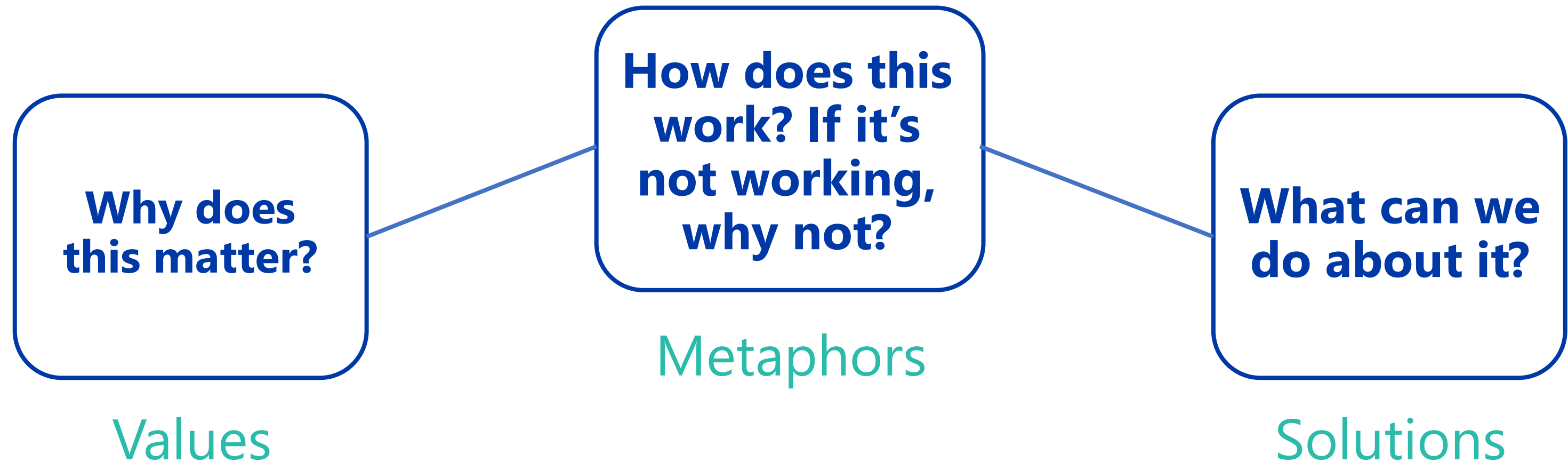
Multiple Models Available



Choose the Cues that Activate Productive Models

An Effective Narrative

Builds understanding, shifts attitudes, generates support for policy solutions



Avoid

- *Individualism* drives aging outcomes
- Aging = declining
- Older people as *other*
- Aging (population) is a crisis
- Fixed, finite resources
- Just another -ism

Advance

- Context shapes decisions and outcomes
- The future is a time for improvement
- We are all better off by being inclusive
- Interventions can change outcomes
- Solutions stories: systems, supports
- How ageism works

Question 3

When framing messages for aging and COVID, urgency should take precedence over efficacy.

True

False

Reframing the Response to COVID

- Find an urgency/efficacy balance
 - Bring a solution when you can
 - Explain how it works
 - Tone matters
- Think carefully when positioning groups
 - Interconnections as strength
 - Responsibility to all
 - Everyone stepping up/doing the right thing
 - Advance principle of targeted universalism not “vulnerable groups”
- Explanation is power
 - Explain why problems exists
 - Show what actions/solutions do
- How we frame now affects what’s possible later

Balance Urgency and Efficacy

Before:

“Older people are at the center of the COVID crisis and are disproportionately impacted by the disease.”

After:

“Because older people are disproportionately impacted by the disease, states are planning community actions to reduce exposures to the virus.”

Explanation is power

Before

"Ageism in our healthcare system has always been a problem and it is becoming a crisis during this pandemic."

After

"Under stressful conditions, healthcare providers are likely to make snap decisions about people solely based on their age that will determine the quality of care they receive. We need to make sure our standards of care do not discriminate on the basis of age."

Think carefully about how you position groups

Before:

"Most of us will have a few unpleasant days of aches and fever. But for the elderly neighbor down the street or for our grandparents in nursing homes, it's a different story. Seniors, as well as the disabled, are vulnerable to severe disease. For their sakes, we need to make sacrifices."

After:

This virus is highly contagious, and people could be spreading it without realizing. When we all stay home today, we see fewer new cases tomorrow. By keeping our physical distance, we slow the spread. This protects people in our communities who are most at risk and the availability of the lifesaving health care we all depend on."

Where can I learn more?

- Visit the Reframing Aging Initiative Website
 - www.reframingaging.org
 - *Caravan*, bi-monthly newsletter
- Sign up for FrameWorks' *Framing COVID-19 Newsletter*:
 - <http://frameworksinstitute.org/framing-covid-19.html>



Changing American culture is challenging and changing attitudes and behaviors around the universal experience of aging especially so.

- A generational change
- Ongoing impact
- Positive perceptions of aging: Priceless