
MEMBER'S GUIDE

Project

ease



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Please complete the activities in this workbook before your next group meeting, and remember to bring it back with you to the meeting.

INTRODUCTION

The ideas you have about older people may come from your grandparents and other older people you have met or heard about. Think about these people and older people in general (whom we sometimes call senior citizens). Think about the way old people are shown on T.V. Do you know where your ideas about being old come from?

A lot of older people in your community whom you don't know may be very different from the ones you've met before or heard about. To explore your ideas about being old, read through the next few pages of this guide and fill in the spaces given.

LET'S BEGIN BY LOOKING AT YOU

If you like playing basketball or reading books now, you may know a whole lot about basketball or books when you are older. You probably have likes and dislikes that are different from those of your friends at school. Older people are just as different from one another. Everyone has special interests and ideas, no matter what their age.

Some people like being outdoors, or reading books, or playing basketball. How would you describe yourself and the things you like to do?

Now imagine the kinds of things older people do.

List some things that old and young people might do together for fun or to help the community:

STEREOTYPES

Many young people think that all older people are the same. This is called a **stereotype**. We create a stereotype when we think that every older person is just like the older people we have heard about or seen before. For example, if your grandfather uses a wheelchair and you think that all older people use wheelchairs, you have a stereotype of older people.

There are stereotypes for young people too. For instance, some adults think that all kids wear sloppy clothes and listen to loud music, or that teenagers don't know how to save money. They probably base their opinions on something they've heard or someone they've seen. But that doesn't mean that all kids or teenagers are the same!

Can you think of stereotypes someone might have about YOU because of your age?

How does it make you feel when people have opinions about you before they know you just because of your age? Or because you are a boy or a girl? Or because you look a certain way?

You can see how stereotypes can make you feel bad. Stereotypes also can stop you from getting to know someone who might be fun to know. For instance, if you thought that all older people were grumpy and complained all the time, you wouldn't want to meet new older people. You might never meet an older person who is fun to be with.

The best way to put aside stereotypes is to meet a lot of new people. If you become friends with older people, you will start to see for yourself that everyone is different, no matter what their age is.

That's what Project EASE does: it gets young people together with older adults to meet and do activities together. You will meet with many different older people in a group, and you will have the chance to make a special friend. EASE stands for Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences, and that's exactly what you'll be doing.

PROJECT EASE

Project EASE is special because you will be **equal partners** with the senior citizens you meet! You will be working together, as partners, on the projects you choose.

To make this a fun and interesting project, a little planning is needed first. Your group leader will help you plan an activity to do with older people.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL DO IN PROJECT EASE:

1. COMPLETE TAKE-HOME TASKS.

- Interview an older person.
- Help your group leader make contact with seniors in the community.
- Fill out a record sheet at the end of the project.

2. LEARN ABOUT AGING.

- Explore stereotypes about aging (you can discuss the stereotypes people have about younger people too!).
- Discuss your feelings and experiences as you and other members of your group do things with older people.
- Learn ways to communicate better with people of different ages and with different life experiences.

3. TAKE COMMITMENTS SERIOUSLY.

- Come to activities on time. Older people are busy too!

It takes time to make good friends with people of any age. It will take time for you and your new friends to get to know each other, but when you do, you will have a lot of fun and feel a sense of accomplishment in the end!

Before the next meeting, complete the following Project EASE activity.

ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW YOU—A TALK WITH AN OLDER PERSON

In this activity, you will get to know an older person who lives in your community by interviewing him or her. This person could be a neighbor, a friend of the family, or even one of your grandparents. There are only two things about this person that you should consider: the person you choose should live near you (or be visiting near you) so that you can interview him or her in person, and he or she should be at least 60 years old. Ask your parents and your group leader for suggestions.

- 1** When you have thought of someone, call the person on the phone. Ask if you can visit for about twenty minutes. Say that you would like to talk about what life was like when the person was your age, what he or she likes to do now, and what young people and senior citizens might do together.
- 2** Plan what you will talk about. Remember, you are going to try to get an idea of what it is like to be older person in our country today.
- 3** To start the interview, introduce yourself to your interview partner. Tell him or her a little bit about yourself:
 - where you go to school
 - what you like to do in your free time
 - the activities you and your group members have worked on recently
 - and anything else you would like to talk aboutGive your interview partner a chance to ask you questions as well.
- 4** Then begin the interview. There are blank spaces after every interview question on the next page. After you have finished your interview, write down a few notes about what was said, so you will remember it later. At your next group meeting you will talk about what you learned from your interview partner, so make a few notes to help you remember!

5 Here is a list of questions that you can ask your interview partner. You do not need to stop with these. If you want to ask other questions, that is fine. Good luck!

- How do you think being a child or teenager has changed since you were young?
- What did you like to do when you were my age?
- How has your life changed now that you are older?
- Where do senior citizens get together in the community? What do they do there?
- What do you think about young people today?
- What kinds of community problems could a group of kids and older people work on together? What kinds of activities could they do together for fun?