



Connecting Generations Through Myth-Busting

Carol Ikeda, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences



Ka 'Aha

Weaving Generations to
Build Healthy Communities

An Intergenerational
and Aging Program

Fun, daily activities that focus on strengthening connections between different generations help to build strong, healthy communities.

For more information about the Ka 'Aha program and other intergenerational programs, visit www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/kaaha

“Babies are cute and wrinkled; older people are ugly and wrinkled!”

“New coins are shiny and worthless; old coins are rare and valuable!”

“New furniture is cheap and breakable; antique furniture is durable and priceless!”

“Today’s water is fresh and often contaminated; wine is aged to enhance taste!”

Isn’t it ironic that we cherish “old” things but not “old” people? The media has popularized the idea that youth is beautiful and advanced age is unattractive. And who wants to be unattractive? But most everyone will agree, if they think about it, that *our elders are living treasures!*

A few generations ago, most families included mom, dad, and the grandparents. Young people grew up in a family environment that cherished the wisdom, experience, and love of aging grandparents. Today, young people live independently, raise their own children, and often live far from aging parents and grandparents. Because experience with older adults has become more limited, misperceptions (“myths” or stereotypes) about aging and the elderly are on the rise.

Some myths*

Older workers are less productive than younger workers.

Sickness and disability come with old age.

Older people cannot learn.

Old people are weak and helpless.

Old people are boring and forgetful.

Old people are grouchy and cantankerous.

Old people are set in their ways, unable to change.

In reality:

Mental performance doesn’t begin to decline until about age 70, and then, under normal circumstances, it does so slowly.

The functional efficiency of body organs gradually declines after age 30! There is a slight annual decrease in speed, strength, endurance, reaction time, and agility.

Older drivers (over 65) have fewer accidents per person than drivers under the age of 65.

With aging, the personality becomes remarkably stable, and this continues as one ages.

Most older people continue to do nearly as much work as people who work full-time.

Older workers miss less work due to illness and are less likely to be tardy than younger workers.

Older people have much to share with others: a lifetime of knowledge, skills, talents, and experiences.

Tip

The aging process can be slowed by diet, exercise, substance-free lifestyle, intellectual activities, meaningful social relationships, and a sense of purpose. Life is a journey. As we listen and learn from our elders about their journeys, we will be enriched!

* as compiled by the Seniors Network