

# ACTIVE AGING PRINCIPLES

## 1. Think, Speak, and Act From a Positive Place.

Your thoughts form the foundation for what you say, and what you say influences what you do. When you come from a positive place, it becomes easier to act in positive ways. A positive approach can positively influence problem-solving, constructive relationships, and reaching desired outcomes. Negativity is not conducive to those things.

## 2. Remember that "We" is Stronger Than "I".

Our work is a team effort. The collective efforts of the team are much more powerful than any individual alone. "We" means understanding the bigger picture behind every action and decision.

## 3. Acknowledge and Embrace Our Differences.

We all come from diverse backgrounds and have had different life experiences, so our responses to situations will differ. Perceptions of a situation come from your lens, shaped by your background and life experiences. Recognize that different isn't necessarily wrong.

## 4. Be Open to Multiple Possibilities.

Almost always, there is more than one solution to an issue. Be open to the suggestions of others. Some of the best solutions come from the collaboration of many thoughts and ideas. You don't have to figure it out alone.

## 5. Look for Solutions and Avoid Pointing Fingers.

How a situation came to be or who participated in it is much less important than finding solutions. We will fix the problem, learn from it, and move on. We will not complain, blame others or throw anyone under the bus.

## 6. Listen to Understand.

Be generous with your listening. Be present in your discussions. People need to feel heard and understood. When you listen to understand, you build stronger relationships because you more fully understand the other person's ideas, situation, or concerns.

## 7. Address Issues with the Right Person.

The grapevine can distort your words or intentions. So, speak for yourself and hold conversations only with the person/s involved in the situation. Maintain confidentiality and choose wisely what you share with whom.

## 8. Recognize, Affirm, and Support Others' Efforts and Good Work.

The relationships you have with others grow stronger when you acknowledge their efforts and work. Even if the work falls short of an ideal, acknowledging the effort makes it easier to work together now and in the future. Build contagious enthusiasm by celebrating successes, no matter how small.

## 9. Ask for What You Need.

There will be times when you need support, ideas, feedback, a safe place to vent, and 1,000 other things. You function better when you ask for what you need.

## 10. Demonstrate Compassion.

Compassion is a concern for the suffering of others. Be compassionate in your interactions with consumers and co-workers. Acknowledge that you cannot fix everything for everyone and that what you see as a solution may not work for them. Compassion fatigue is real; remember to "ask for what you need" (#9) for your mental health.

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## 11. Assume Positive Intent.

When you assume positive intent, you seek to understand rather than respond defensively. Look past your mood or feeling, particularly if you are having a bad day.

## 12. Focus on What You Can Control.

When you focus on what you can control, you don't allow the unknown to overwhelm you or cause undue stress that can lead you to react in ways that are not productive or helpful.

## 13. Accept and Honor Your Responsibilities.

Responsibilities are all connected. Anything you do or don't do impacts your co-workers and your consumers. Understand what it takes to do your job well and seek to do more than the minimum. What you do helps someone else; what you don't do falls to someone else.

## 14. Leave Your Ego at the Door.

Our agency is here to accomplish things that benefit others, not ourselves. If you remove the personal feeling from the situation and "assume positive intent" (#11), you can accomplish more and feel good about it. It's not about you. It's not personal.

## 15. Get Excited About Doing the Right Things.

Choose to do the "right" thing and remember that's not always the same as the "easy" thing. Whether fixing a consumer's problem or working through an issue with a co-worker, putting in the work to do the right thing will always offer greater rewards than doing the easy thing.

## 16. Take Ownership and Be Accountable.

Your behavior is on you, the choices you make are on you, and none of us are perfect. When you acknowledge the mistakes you've made, you start to improve.

## 17. Be Generous with Your Time, Treasure, and/or Talent.

Our agency cannot meet the needs of our consumers, participants, or employees without the philanthropic efforts of the Foundation and the Active Aging Centers. Offering your time, treasure, and/or talent is an investment that directly benefits you as well as others.

## 18. Recognize the Impact of Your Words.

Words have an impact on communication. Have difficult conversations from a place of kindness, thoughtfulness, and respect. Use words that build others up rather than demean or diminish them.

## 19. Continuously Learn.

Learning leads to growth. Growth leads to better outcomes for all. We can learn in formal training sessions but also in our daily work. Mistakes can be powerful learning lessons. If we're not learning, we're stagnating.

## 20. Expect Change.

"There is nothing permanent except change." Although change can be frustrating, we recognize that change IS going to happen. So, we embrace change and support each other through the necessary change process. We work WITH change rather than against it.