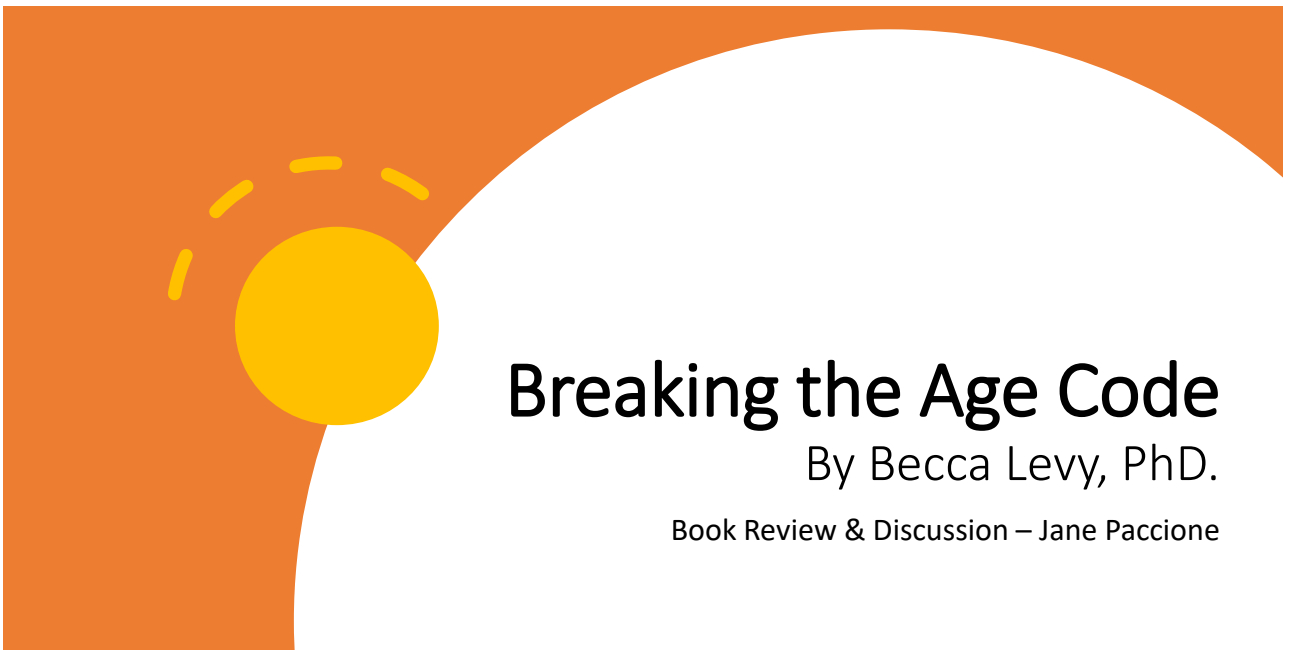




## Breaking the Age Code

*Presented by Jane Paccione, MPA and C. Byron Cordes, LCSW, C-ASWCM, CMC*

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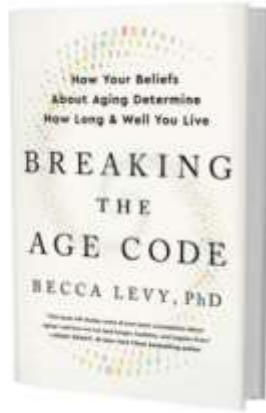
## Breaking the Age Code

By Becca Levy, PhD.

Book Review & Discussion – Jane Paccione



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Levy is a professor of epidemiology at the Yale School of Public Health and professor of psychology at Yale University.

She's also a scientific adviser to the WHO (World Health Organization) Campaign to Combat Ageism. Over the course of her career, Levy has received several honors from organizations including the American Psychological Association, the Gerontological Society of America, and also Next Avenue.



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## Activity

Jot down five words or phrases that come to mind when you think of an older person.



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## Objectives

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Describe the importance of aging beliefs on health and well-being
- Explain differential effects on longevity
- Apply new strategies to confront ageism

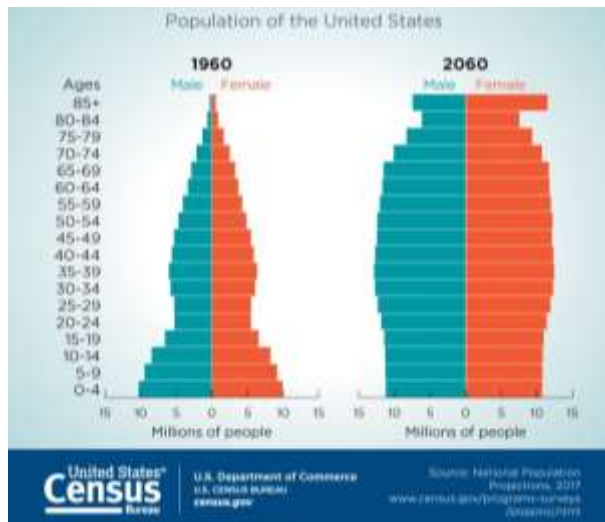


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From Pyramid  
to Pillar:  
*A Century of  
Change*



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## Summary

- Levy's research shows how health problems that have been thought to be entirely due to aging, such as memory loss, hearing decline, and cardiovascular events, are instead influenced by **negative age beliefs**. Positive age beliefs, on the other hand, lead to better health and even longer life – **7.5 years on average**, in fact.



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## Surprise!

- **Cognition** — People who stress positive age beliefs enjoy better memory performance.
- **Physical health** — Patients with favorable attitudes about aging are more likely to recover from severe disability.
- **Mental health** — Individuals who see aging as a positive experience have lower stress levels.
- **Longevity** — Younger people who adopt a positive outlook on aging live an average of 7.5 years longer.



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# Ageism

is the **stereotyping** of, **prejudice** against, and **discrimination** towards people because of their age


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# Impact on Health

The World Health Organization has called ageism the most prevalent and socially acceptable form of prejudice and discrimination today,” says Levy



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## In American society...

Old age is presented as something to be feared and avoided. Aging individuals are portrayed as fragile, forgetful, and a burden on society. The elderly are marginalized, ignored, and “put out to pasture.”

Ageism... The **Silent Epidemic ... operates, undetected, in so many different realms — social media, advertising, pop culture, Hollywood, and health care.**



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## The “Medical Disability” Complex

Another source of ageism has been the increased “medicalization” of aging, Levy says.

“The multibillion-dollar ‘medical disability complex’ is based on expensive procedures, devices, and pharmaceutical drugs, which are more profitable than prevention efforts,” she says.

“When ageism is ignored, doctors are apt to dismiss treatable conditions, such as back pain or depression, as standard features of old age.”



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## \$63 billion cost of ageism



One of every seven dollars spent on the eight most expensive health conditions for all Americans over the age of 60 during one year. Among the health conditions examined were cardiovascular disease, mental disorders, and chronic respiratory disease.



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## Cultural Models Drive People's Thinking



- Cultural models are patterns of thinking created through years of experience and expectation.
- They are taken-for-granted and largely automatic assumptions.
- People rely on cultural models to interpret, organize and make meaning out of all sorts of stimuli, including experiences, feelings, thoughts...and your communications.



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## Implicit Bias

- Implicit biases are attitudes and stereotypes we are not aware of. We form these **subconscious negative** judgments about many things, including age.
- Knowing about these implicit biases makes us less likely to act on these “snap judgments” and more likely to treat people fairly.
- *Research shows that exposure to an explanation of “implicit bias” – what it is and how it works to perpetuate ageism – actually **reduces** people’s implicit bias towards older people.*



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## Age beliefs drive outcomes.

Levy explains... Age beliefs above and beyond the emotional outlooks of whether, say, you are a glass half-full or half empty kind of person, that harm or improve our health.



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## Stereotype Embodiment Theory (SET)

### 4 Mechanisms

- Are internalized from society starting in childhood and continuing...
- Operate unconsciously
- Increase in power as they become more relevant
- Impact health...psychological, biological and behavioral pathways

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate"

Carl Jung



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## Six ABC Age Code Tools to Bolster Positive Age Beliefs

- A** = Increasing Awareness of age beliefs
- B** = Placing Blame for obstacles where due
- C** = Challenging negative age beliefs



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### A = Increasing Awareness of age beliefs

- Record both negative and positive images of aging that you encounter in one week.
- Write down when older people are not included.



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**B=Placing  
Blame for  
Obstacles  
where Due**

**Find the Real Cause**



**Possible Reasons**

Exhaustion

Stress

Heightened Emotions

Distraction

**B = Placing  
Blame for  
Obstacles  
where Due**

**Blame Ageism not Aging**

In the Medical realm, 20% of older patients have reported experiencing ageism in medical encounters which include not receiving appropriate treatments.

C =  
Challenging  
Negative  
Age Beliefs

## Dismantle Negative Age Beliefs

Challenge negative age beliefs by presenting accurate information:

Levy presents 14 common negative age stereotypes and how to fight back with facts, many of which reveal strength.



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## Time to Reframe Aging



*Before*



*After*



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Of all the research findings that you learned about in Dr. Levy's book, which one was most interesting to you, and why?



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## A Call to End Structural Ageism

- The miracle of longevity provides such incredible opportunity to individuals and the societies in which we live. Yet, today so much of that potential remains unrealized because we haven't adequately addressed these challenges that hinder older populations from living their later lives in meaningful, productive ways.

*Paul Irving, Chair Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging*



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## What YOU Can Do

- Take the Implicit Association Test to measure your own implicit bias  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>
- Call out ageism when you see it or hear it
- Learn more about the WHO's initiative to combat ageism and the Reframing Aging initiative
- Request a Reframing Aging presentation/workshop from SALSA



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