

Intergenerational Dialogue Session Guide

**A Guide to Challenge Ageism and to Promote Sexuality,
Gender and Diversity in the Third Age**



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Erasmus+ Project: “Never Gets Old – Intergenerational Gender and Sexuality Education”

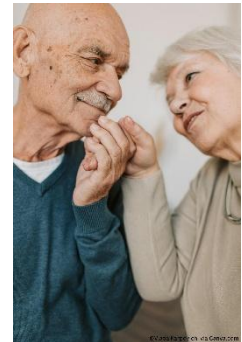
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INTRODUCTION



In the Erasmus+ project “Never Gets Old – Intergenerational Gender and Sexuality Education” the project team, consisting of six partner organisations from five different countries, developed the workshop format of the “Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions” (IDS). These are an exchange format that enables personal interactions between members of different age groups in one-to-one conversations about the topics of sexuality, sexual and gender diversity in older age and across the lifetime. The focus is on an open exchange between the generations, not on convincing each other, but on understanding and learning from each other.



The event offers space for discussions about:

- **lived experiences in relation to sexuality, sexual health, identity and gender**
- **social images and how they change**
- **the importance of diversity in old age and in the context of health and care**

In the long term the project aims to improve the social situation and healthcare of older people and to strengthen dialogue and solidarity between the generations. The ID-Sessions help to open the space for conversations and thus contribute to a society in which people of all generations are seen and valued in their diversity.

The following guidebook starts with an introduction to the topic of aging and ageism in chapter one and follows with in depth knowledge of sexualities, gender and diversities in later life in chapter two. Chapter three outlines the methodology and important concepts of intergenerational learning whereas chapter four focuses on the speed-dating approach to conversations. Chapter five offers a comprehensive practical guide to implement the intergenerational dialogue sessions and chapter six rounds it off with practical guidelines for the impact assessment of the sessions. The IDS-Guide application is aimed at anyone who is interested in intergenerational exchange and wants to contribute to the destigmatisation of sexuality as well as sexual and gender diversity in old age. These include adult educators, health care provider, care workers, universities for senior citizens, teachers at vocational schools and universities, social organisations and committed private individuals

AGING AND AGEISM

CHAPTER 1

AUTHOR: SOCIETATEA ROMÂNĂ ALZHEIMER (IOANA TEACOE)



“Prejudices disable us; they are a societal myth [...] older adults live with this prejudice: “No, I’m no longer capable.””

(Participant of the Romanian Never Gets Old Focus Group, March 2025)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Understood aging as a multi-dimensional process, including biological, psychological, and social changes, and the concepts of the third and fourth age.

Recognized the forms and impacts of ageism, including institutional, interpersonal, and self-directed discrimination.

Appreciated the importance of sexual health in later life and the barriers older adults face in accessing care, especially women and LGBTQ+ individuals.



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Introduction

As they age, people undergo changes in their mental, emotional, physical/biological, and social aspects. Aging at the individual level can be defined in various ways, depending on the perspective we take. We attempt to define aging using the book *Biology of Aging: Observations and Principles* by Robert Arking (Arking, 2006) as a starting point. Aging can thus be described as a time-independent series of cumulative, progressive, intrinsic, and deleterious functional and structural changes that usually begin to manifest at reproductive maturity and eventually culminate in death. It is important to note that individuals may age differently.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has taken a stance regarding aging and health, as there is an increase in the number and proportion of the older population. It is predicted that



by 2030, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over. Taking into account that people in their third or fourth age are predisposed to developing concomitant health conditions, WHO states that “a comprehensive public health response must address this wide range of older people’s experiences and needs” (World Health Organization: WHO, 2024). Also, the United Nations

(UN) General Assembly declared 2021–2030 the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and asked WHO to lead the implementation. Due to changes that unravel during the process of aging, people of the third age can be seen as more frail, dependent, or a burden to society. These are all ageist beliefs.

One aspect frequently overlooked regarding aging is sexual health. Ageist assumptions contribute to silence and stigma, leaving many older adults, especially women and LGBTQ+ individuals, without adequate care or recognition in this area. According to WHO, ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their age” (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing (DHA), 2021). Results from the European Social Survey (which encompasses 54,988 respondents from 28 countries) show that age is the most common attribute assigned to discrimination, followed by gender and ethnicity in almost all countries examined (Ayalon, 2013).

Diving into Aging



Given that this project and our guide will frequently use the term **“third age”**, it is important to define what this concept entails. As noted by Silva (2008) life has traditionally been understood as progressing through three major stages: youth (a time of learning and development), adulthood (a period of work, responsibility, and family life), and old age (often associated with decline and withdrawal). However, recent perspectives on aging have introduced a more nuanced view. The “third age” refers to a distinct stage of life that follows retirement from professional activity but precedes the potential physical decline associated with advanced old age. It is perceived as a time of autonomy, activity, social engagement, and personal fulfilment. This concept has emerged relatively recently, supported by the promotion of a positive image of aging, driven by social gerontology, active aging policies, and the recognition of older adults as active members of society and relevant participants in the consumer market. Thus, the “third age” stands apart from the traditional view of old age by emphasizing an active, participatory lifestyle focused on ongoing personal development, helping to reshape how aging is understood in contemporary society. Some researchers have also identified a “fourth age,” characterized by physical decline and increased care needs, distinguishing it from the active and independent nature of the third age.

From a biological perspective, changes associated with aging occur in every multicellular organism that reaches reproductive maturity, in every member of that species, and have the same molecular etiology (Hayflick, 2007). Aging hallmarks can be divided into three categories: (1) primary (causes deterioration in cellular structure and function, independently of disease); (2) antagonistic (the responses to the damage of primary aging); and (3) integrative (the consequences of the responses and culprits of the aging phenotype) (McHugh & Gil, 2017). All these changes run unevenly in the various organs and systems of the body and may also take place at different rates in individuals. Dziechciaż and Filip (2014) compiled a list of such changes in various systems, such as circulatory, respiratory, digestive, locomotor, and uro-genital. For example, in men, aging is often associated with an increase in the size and weight of the prostate gland, which can further impact urinary function. In women, hormonal changes lead to vaginal atrophy, thinning and drying of the vaginal walls, which can cause discomfort and other symptoms.





From a psychological and social point of view, Charles and Carstensen (2019) note in their work that older adults often show improved emotional regulation, reporting fewer mood swings and more stable, positive emotions. They tend to focus on emotionally meaningful goals and experiences, a shift supported by theories like Socioemotional Selectivity Theory. This focus contributes to the so-called “positivity effect,” where older individuals remember positive experiences more vividly than negative ones. While personality traits generally remain stable, tendencies like neuroticism often decrease, supporting emotional well-being. Socially, older adults typically maintain smaller but closer social networks, prioritizing relationships that offer emotional depth over quantity. They tend to avoid conflict, respond more calmly to interpersonal stress, and value social harmony. However, the risk of social isolation increases with age due to physical limitations or loss of peers, which can negatively affect health. Still, meaningful engagement through volunteering or caregiving can enhance well-being and even extend longevity.

Altogether, these changes suggest that aging is not just a process of decline, but one of psychological adaptation, shaped by shifting goals, life experience, and the importance of meaningful social connections.

Diving into Ageism

Ageism isn't just about isolated incidents; it permeates how we think, feel, and act toward others based on age. It manifests in three keyways: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

First, there are the stereotypes: the simplified, often inaccurate ideas we hold about people because of their age. For example, many assume older adults are frail or that young people are careless or irresponsible. These broad generalizations shape the lens through which we view entire age groups. Then come the feelings: the emotional reactions stirred up by those stereotypes. Sometimes we feel pity for older people, fear of getting older ourselves, or resentment toward younger generations. These emotions can be powerful, colouring how we relate to others. Finally, these thoughts and feelings translate into actions: discrimination. This is when people experience unfair treatment simply because of their age. Whether subtle or overt, these behaviours exclude or disadvantage certain age groups, creating real barriers in everyday life.

Ageism manifests at three main levels (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing (DHA), 2021):



Institutional Ageism

Refers to the laws, rules, social norms, policies, and practices of institutions that unfairly restrict opportunities and systematically disadvantage individuals because of their age. This can include health-care rationing based on age, discriminatory hiring practices, or mandatory retirement ages. Such ageism can be deeply ingrained and often goes unrecognized because the rules and practices become normalized. Its impact is often inferred from disparate outcomes between age groups, rather than explicit intent.



Interpersonal Ageism

Occurs during interactions between two or more individuals. Examples include disrespecting or patronizing older or younger adults, ignoring their viewpoints, or using "elder-speak" – an overly accommodating tone and simplistic language towards older individuals, which can infantilize them. It also includes insulting people based on their age, such as calling older people "worthless" or younger people "thoughtless" or "criminals".



Self-directed Ageism

Happens when individuals internalize ageism from their surrounding culture and turn these biases against themselves. This can lead to individuals conforming to age stereotypes, which in turn reinforces interpersonal and institutional ageism.

Understanding Ageism in Europe

Since the partners involved in this project come from various European countries, it is especially important to explore how age-related discrimination affects people across the continent.

Data from the World Health Organization (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing, 2021) highlights that ageism remains a widespread issue in Europe, impacting both older and younger populations in various social settings, including employment, healthcare, and everyday interactions.

The findings below offer a clearer picture of how age-based bias continues to shape experiences and attitudes across generations in Europe.

- In Europe, one in three older people reports having been a target of ageism.
- A 2008–2009 European Social Survey across 28 countries revealed that younger people aged 15–24 reported the highest rates of perceived unfair treatment due to their age (55%). This group, like all other age groups, reported experiencing more discrimination based on age than on sex, race, or ethnic background.
- In the same survey, younger adults (20–29 years old) received lower ratings than older adults (over 70) across positive stereotypes, including being seen as friendly, competent, respectful, and having high moral standards.
- A 2015 European survey showed that 44.2% of the population in the European region held moderately or highly ageist attitudes.
- Workplace: The European Working Conditions Survey 2015 indicated that age discrimination among employees peaked at age 20 and again at age 59. More than half of Europeans surveyed in 2015 believed that being 55 or older was a disadvantage for job applicants, compared to only 16% for those younger than 30.

Impact of Ageism on Health

A global systematic review, which included 422 studies from 45 countries, found that ageism was associated with worse outcomes in 96% of the health domains examined (Chang et al., 2020). The sources indicate that these health consequences of ageism appear to be increasing, potentially linked to financial downturns. The impact is most significant for self-directed ageism and is more likely to affect disadvantaged groups and those with lower levels of education.

According to WHO's Global report on ageism (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing (DHA), 2021), ageism is associated with reduced longevity, poorer recovery from illness or disability, and an increased likelihood of engaging in risky health behaviours. Age-based discrimination can also lead to inappropriate medical treatment and a lack of access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services, particularly affecting older women. Mentally, ageism contributes to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline, especially when older individuals internalize negative stereotypes. Socially, ageism undermines quality of life by fostering isolation, loneliness, and fear, often reinforced by negative portrayals in the media.



“The need for belonging is a fundamental need and is not exclusive to young people.”

(Participant of the Romanian Never Gets Old Focus Group, March 2025)

Ageism and Sexual Health

Sexual health is a vital aspect of well-being at any age. Yet for many older adults, discussing sexuality with healthcare providers remains challenging. Cultural beliefs, social stigma, and ageist assumptions often label sex in later life as unnecessary or inappropriate. As a result, many older people, especially women and LGBTQ+ individuals, avoid conversations about sexual health altogether.

Healthcare providers may also hesitate to initiate these discussions, whether due to embarrassment, lack of training, or personal beliefs that older people are no longer sexually active. This mutual discomfort creates a cycle of silence in which important health needs remain unaddressed. Older patients may feel judged or misunderstood, especially if they've previously experienced dismissive or negative responses from providers. In some cases, patients may be accompanied by family members during consultations, which discourages open dialogue around intimate topics. Gender, age, and perceived experience of the healthcare provider can also influence communication. Many older adults report feeling more comfortable with professionals of the same gender or a similar age. Women in particular often feel more at ease speaking with gynaecologists than with general practitioners, especially when discussing concerns related to intimacy or same-sex relationships.

“In my generation, girls were taught that it was not proper to talk about sex [...] the sexuality of older adults is sometimes hard to accept, even by their own children, if they wish to rebuild their lives in old age.”

(Participant of the Romanian Never Gets Old Focus Group, March 2025)



For LGBTQ+ older adults, the barriers are even higher. Many have lived through times of criminalization and social exclusion and may fear discrimination or invisibility in today's medical settings. Care homes and health institutions often assume heterosexuality and fail to create inclusive, affirming environments. As a result, queer older people may avoid disclosing their identities or may not seek care at all. Adding to these challenges is the limited education healthcare providers receive on sexuality and aging. Many professionals report feeling unprepared to address sexual health in older adults, especially within LGBTQ+ communities. Public health messaging and materials rarely target older populations, leaving them uninformed about STI prevention, HIV symptoms, and available resources. These insights are drawn from Ezhova et al. (2020); we encourage readers to consult the full article for a deeper exploration of the topic.

Conclusions

Aging is a natural, multifaceted process involving biological, psychological, and social transformations. While these changes are often inevitable and diverse in manifestation, the way society responds to them plays a critical role in shaping the lived experiences of older adults. Ageism, through stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, compounds the challenges of aging by reinforcing negative expectations, limiting opportunities, and compromising health outcomes. Ageism in healthcare creates systemic blind spots that prevent older adults, especially LGBTQ+ individuals and older women, from receiving appropriate sexual health care. Addressing these barriers requires a combination of provider training, inclusive environments, better communication practices, and targeted sexual health education. Only then can sexual health in later life be respected as a legitimate, essential part of healthy aging. Efforts by global bodies such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations signal growing recognition of the need for systemic change.



The Decade of Healthy Ageing initiative calls for a coordinated response that promotes inclusion, addresses inequalities, and challenges deeply ingrained societal attitudes. Combating ageism requires multi-level interventions: reforming institutional frameworks, fostering respectful interpersonal interactions, and reshaping internal beliefs about aging. Education, inclusive policies, and intergenerational engagement are key strategies in dismantling ageist structures and enabling individuals of all ages to thrive.

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SEXUALITIES, GENDERS AND DIVERSITIES IN LATER LIFE

CHAPTER 2

AUTHOR: LE GIROFARD (CURT MORGANE)



"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

(Audre Lorde)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Acquired key concepts related to sexuality, gender, and diversity in older adulthood.

Gained awareness of specific challenges faced by LGBTQIAP+ and other marginalized seniors.

Identified inclusive ways to address these topics in intergenerational and professional settings.



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Introduction

Sexuality and intimacy in older age remain taboo topics, often silenced by stubborn stereotypes and cultural discomfort. Yet, as recent studies (Thomas & Hazif-Thomas, 2021; Les Petits Frères des Pauvres, 2022) emphasize, desire, affection, and emotional connection do not vanish with age. They evolve, shaped by physiological changes and social environments, but remain vital to well-being. Our focus groups revealed diverse experiences. Some LGBTQIAP+ seniors (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Aromantic, Agender, Pansexual) carry the scars of a time when their identities were criminalized and of the homophobia, they themselves internalized:

“I lived with my ‘friend’ for decades. Everyone knew, but we never held hands. Now people do it openly, and it makes me uneasy.”

(Participant of the French Never Gets Old Focus Group)

Others, who came out later in life, lament the lack of offline spaces for connection. These stories reveal intergenerational tensions within the queer community, where internalized homophobia coexists with a quest for visibility and belonging.

Addressing sexuality in later life, particularly outside heteronormative frameworks, requires challenging clichés. For many, it’s less about sexual performance than about shared intimacy, tenderness, and affirming identity. Sexuality in older age may be non-penetrative, shaped by health limitations, emotional shifts, or lived experiences.

But this isn’t exclusive to LGBTQIAP+ individuals. Broader societal views also desexualize older people, regardless of orientation or gender. The myth of asexual aging contributes to isolation, invisibility, and even medical neglect. Sexuality is part of dignity, of being seen as a full person.



Key Definitions

Genders and Orientations

Gender

Socially constructed roles, behaviours, and norms associated with being a man, woman, or non-binary. Unlike biological sex, gender is fluid and shaped by cultural expectations.

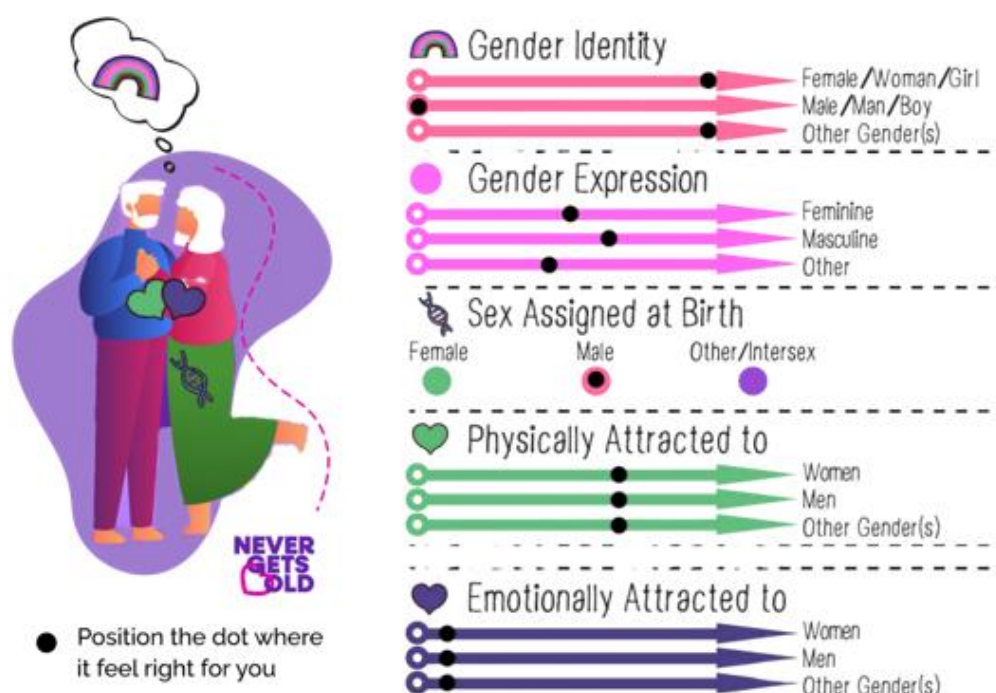
Sex (Biological)

Assigned at birth based on anatomy and chromosomes. Traditionally binary (male/female) but also includes intersex variations that don't fit medical norms.

Gender Identity

One's deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, neither, or somewhere else on the spectrum.

- **Cisgender:** Gender identity matches assigned sex
- **Transgender:** Gender identity differs from assigned sex



Gender Expression Outward presentation of gender through dress, behaviour, or voice— independent of identity.

Sexual/Romantic Orientation Attraction (emotional, romantic, sexual) toward others. Examples include:

- **Heterosexual:** Attraction to the other gender
- **Homosexual** (gay, lesbian): Attraction to the same gender
- **Bisexual/Pansexual:** Attraction to more than one gender
- **Asexual:** Little or no sexual attraction (may still have romantic attraction)

Diversity and Intersectionality

Intersectionality



Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g., gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, physical appearance, height, etc.) combine to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege.

The term was coined by Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a leading critical race theory scholar, in her seminal 1989 paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."

Example:

An older, Black, lesbian woman may face:

- **Ageism:** Stereotypes about asexuality in aging
- **Sexism:** Invisibility of older women
- **Homophobia:** Marginalization in care settings
- **Racism:** Disparities in access to healthcare or housing

Sexual and Gender Minorities (LGBTQIAP+)

Includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Aromantic, Agender, Pansexual. The additional "+" stands for all the other identities not encompassed in the short acronym

Queer

An umbrella term for non-normative identities, reappropriated by younger generations. Some older individuals may still perceive it as derogatory.

Specific Challenges in Later Life

Legal and Cultural Legacy

Unequal Historical Contexts

The LGBTQIAP+ rights timeline differs across regions, affecting how seniors have lived and aged.

Country	Decriminalization of homosexuality	Same-sex marriage	Adoption/ Assisted Human Reproduction.	Impact on the seniors
France	1982	2013	Adoption: 2013 ART: 2021 (for lesbian couples)	Seniors who have experienced criminalisation, then belated recognition. ART inaccessible to many older lesbian women.
Germany	1969 (FRG) 1988 (GDR)	2017	Adoption: 2017 ART: restrictive (reimbursed for heterosexual couples only)	Dual East/West experience. Generations marked by paragraph 175 (Nazi criminalisation, then continued in the FRG until 1994).
Portugal	1983	2010	Adoption: 2016 ART: 2016 (access extended)	Recent advances, but the Salazar dictatorship still has an impact on seniors who lived through it (homosexuality criminalised until 1982).
Romania	2001	Prohibited	Prohibited	Persistent stigmatisation. Seniors faced with lack of legal recognition and strong social rejection.
Cyprus	1998	No official recognition	Prohibited	Conservative orthodox context. Seniors are often forced into silence.

- **France/Germany:** Despite progress, many LGBTQIAP+ people grew up in criminalized contexts, leading to shame or concealment, especially in care homes.
- **Eastern Europe:** Persistent denial of rights and social support. In Romania, 65% of older gay men live alone and without family.

Internalized Norms and Lifelong Stigma



A. Taboo and Repression

Older LGBTQIAP+ people often internalized stigma.

- *“Going back into the closet”*: 40% hide their identity in retirement homes due to fear of discrimination (Grey Pride, 2023).
- *Gendered sexism*: Older lesbian women face triple invisibility (ageism + sexism + homophobia), especially in healthcare.

B. Racism and Antisemitism

The intersection of age, race, and queerness creates specific experiences:

- Former racial segregation.
- Lack of representation in media.
- Stereotypes like “masculine lesbians” or the hyper sexualization of Black women.



C. Healthcare Access

- 72% of doctors never ask elderly patients about their sexual orientation (Flesia et al., 2023).
- Seniors living with HIV face layered stigma around 30% of HIV diagnoses in France are in those over 50.
- Trans seniors face medical discontinuities, like hormone therapy being disregarded post-70.

Isolation: A Structural Concern

Isolation is a common issue among all elderly, but for LGBTQIAP+ people, especially those without children or supportive families, it can be intensified by fear, stigma, or exclusion from community spaces.

Isolation factors	Key data
Parting ways with family members	90% of LGBTQIAP+ seniors have no children (INSEE, 2023).
Lack of inclusive facilities	Only 12% of nursing homes in France train their staff in LGBTQIAP+ issues (Grey Pride, 2024).
Economic insecurity	40% of queer seniors have pensions under 1,000 € per month (linked to careers that have been disrupted by discrimination).

IDS Approach: Inclusive and Systemic

Inclusive Language



Avoid:

- “At your age, that’s not appropriate” → Ageism
- Defaulting to “Mr./Mrs.” → Gender binarism
- “You have no children?” → Heteronormativity



Use:

- Neutral terms like “older person” instead of “old man/lady”
- Ask: “What pronouns do you use?”
- Use inclusive phrasing: “Do you have close friends or chosen family?”

IDS Example:

Replace “Husband/Wife” on forms with “Partner,” include options for non-binary identities.

Tools for Institutions

A. Staff Training

Mandatory modules on:



- Sexual health and aging
- Trans seniors' needs (e.g., hormone continuity)
- Intersectionality (e.g., supporting a racialized lesbian woman)
- LGBTQIAP+ history (e.g., AIDS crisis, criminalization)

Tool: Grey Pride training kit—includes real-life scenarios.

B. Inclusive Physical Spaces



- Double rooms for same-gender couples
- LGBTQIAP+ symbols in communal areas
- Thematic support groups: “HIV and Aging,” “Coming Out after 60”
- Example: *Maison de la Diversité* (Lyon) offers private rooms and shared areas for communal living

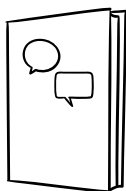
C. Intergenerational Activities



- Queer memory workshops: Elder testimonies shared with youth
- Film discussions (e.g., *Pour la Vie*)
- “Living archives”: artistic projects collecting seniors' stories

IDS Method: Co-create programs *with* seniors → promotes empowerment and autonomy

D. Institutional Policies



- **“Bienvenue” label** (Grey Pride):
 - Criteria: trained staff, anti-discrimination charter, gender-neutral spaces
 - Annual audits with LGBTQIAP+ organizations
- **HIV Protocols**
 - Awareness of “Lazarus Syndrome” (long-term AIDS survivors with PTSD)
 - Partnerships with HIV-specialist physicians

Key Data: In “Bienvenue”-labeled facilities, 30% more residents disclose LGBTQIAP+ identity (Grey Pride, 2024)

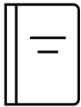
Key Resources

Recommended material for further information.



Associations:

- *Grey Pride*: Handbook “Welcoming LGBTQIAP+ Seniors”
- *Les Audacieuses*: Support groups for older lesbian women



Books:

- *Aging While Queer* (Double Hélice Editions, 2023)



Websites:

- *SOS Homophobia*: Practical sheets on senior rights



Films:

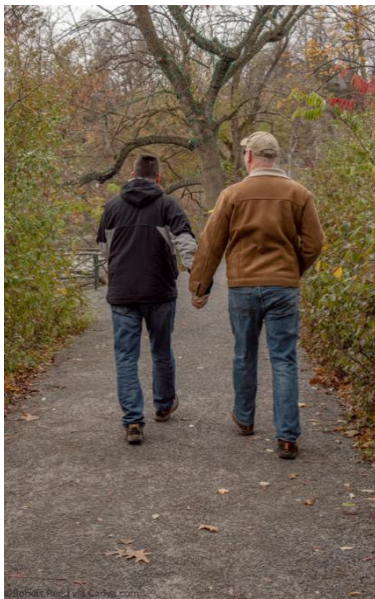
- *If I Die, It Will Be With Joy* by Alexis Taillant (2024, documentary)



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Conclusion

Aging is not a closing chapter, but a continuation of identity, experience, and expression. Yet, for too long, the intersection of aging, sexuality, gender, and diversity has been overlooked—shrouded in silence, stereotypes, and institutional neglect. This guide challenges the persistent myth that older people, especially those from LGBTQIAP+ communities, cease to be sexual, emotional, or complex beings. It insists that dignity in aging includes the right to be seen, heard, and affirmed in all one's identities.



We have explored the nuanced realities faced by LGBTQIAP+ seniors: the legacy of criminalization and shame, the fear of returning to the closet in care homes, the invisibility of older bodies and desires, and the compounded effects of racism, ableism, and poverty. These are not isolated issues, they are systemic, and they require collective responsibility.

An inclusive approach is not simply about better policies; it's about changing mindsets. It asks professionals, families, and institutions to move beyond tolerance and towards genuine affirmation. This means redesigning living spaces, adapting care practices, training staff, and building intergenerational bridges rooted in empathy and respect. It means questioning

our assumptions about age, gender, and intimacy and listening, truly listening, to the voices of those who have lived through silencing, stigma, and survival.

To center LGBTQIAP+ elders is also to reclaim memory. They carry histories of resistance, of love lived in hiding, of communities built from scratch, of grief and joy interwoven. By honouring these lives, we not only repair the past but shape a future where no one ages in shame or isolation.

Let us imagine a world, where getting older means becoming more visible, not less. Where care settings celebrate every kind of life story. Where every person, regardless of age, is free to hold hands, share love, and express who they are: openly, safely, proudly.

That is the promise of an IDS approach. And it is the responsibility of us all to fulfil it.



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METHODOLOGY OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

CHAPTER 3

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„Intergenerational learning is based on the principle that different age groups share valuable experiences, knowledge and perspectives with each other. It is significant because it promotes exchange between different generations, creates understanding and empathy, and strengthens social bonds.“

(Franz 2010, p. 28)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Understood intergenerational learning, including its goals of sharing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives across generations to foster mutual learning and social cohesion.

Recognized key factors for successful dialogue, such as sensitivity to differences, effective communication, respect, active listening, and inclusive interaction.

Appreciated practical considerations, including the role of time, space, and structured environments in promoting meaningful exchange and reducing barriers between generations.



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Introduction

The topic of "Generations in Dialogue" has been part of adult education since the 1990s and describes an educational approach in which people of different generations enter into an exchange together in order to learn from each other and grow together. In different educational formats such as course situations, model projects, intergenerational offers for families or intergenerational volunteering, people of different generations learn from, with and about each other. In view of our demographic development, globalization, diversity in society, in professional and private life, cross-generational educational formats, which include aspects of diverse ways of life, are becoming increasingly important. Social developments raise the question of how the generations want to live together in the future. A new awareness is needed to stimulate intergenerational interactions to strengthen cohesion, break down prejudices and promote mutual understanding in these times of social change. In structured learning arrangements, the exchange of experiences, knowledge and wisdom between young and old can be stimulated and valuable learning processes are created that promote both individual development and social cohesion. Intergenerational learning is therefore an important building block for an inclusive and solidary society in which all generations can benefit from each other.

So, what exactly does intergenerational learning mean? What aspects play a role and what significance does it have for today's adult educators in particular?



Terminology, theoretical background and current meaning are described in chap. 2. For intergenerational learning to achieve the effects described, certain prerequisites must be met. Chapter 3 therefore deals with the basic prerequisites for successful and value-free intergenerational communication, which are implemented in the basic principles of intergenerational learning (Chapter 4). If this process succeeds, intergenerational learning holds valuable opportunities and challenges; both are explained in Chapter 5. Some practical examples are presented in chapter 6 and a conclusion and outlook round off the work.

The Importance of a Difference-Sensitive Cross-Generational Approach

Intergenerational learning refers first and foremost to learning between the generations. For target group-specific pedagogical work, it makes sense to take a closer look at what we mean by "generation" in each case.

Definition and Disambiguation

Wiedemann (2024, p. 2f). distinguishes three social science terms:

1. the **genealogical generation** (based on the degree of kinship),
2. the **historical-political concept of generation** (people from closely successive birth cohorts share experiences, attitudes and values)
3. the **pedagogical concept** of generations (Generations are understood as learning connections with the distribution of roles of teacher or learner, depending on knowledge and experience).



In connection with intergenerational learning, the historical-political concept of generations is usually utilized, "because it emphasizes the particularity of individual generations against the background of their experiences and values – instead of just biological age" (Schmidt-Hertha, 2014a, p. 75f, quoted by Wiedmann 2014, p.3).

In the context of the clarification of discrimination, social attributions and stereotypes in inter-generational dialogue, it makes sense to use this concept of generation as a basis, because values, life experiences and strategies for dealing with stereotypes are passed on and learned within the historical-political succession of generations. To enable an open and constructive dialogue, a high degree of sensitivity to differences is necessary, i.e. the ability to perceive, respect and react appropriately to the differences between people, situations or perspectives. It's about being sensitive to the diversity and uniqueness of others without making biases or assumptions. Then an open dialogue and an understanding of different perspectives will succeed. Here is a statement from a participant from the focus group interview of the Never Gets Old project in March 2025:

„...and I somehow get to know the other perspective, that's how a young person looks at it, that's how an older person looks at it, ..., that's totally important."

(Participant of the German Never Gets Old Focus Group)

Theoretical Background

Intergenerational learning is based on the principles and theories of adult education and inter-generational exchange is explicitly defined as a learning process. The focus is on the question of how knowledge is passed on and how subsequent generations acquire this knowledge and thus change it (Franz 2010, p. 28).

The theoretical basic understanding of intergenerational learning includes the following aspects:



Learning Together

In approaches that involve learning together between the generations, the focus is on the joint development of a topic. The aim is to promote *joint intergenerational learning processes*. The participants of different generations work together on it and "there is therefore no knowledge or experience advantage on the part of one generation, the expert knowledge lies outside the group" (Franz 2010, p. 33).



Social Interaction

In the process of learning with and from each other, the focus is on social interaction, communication and mutual learning, which strengthens social cohesion.



Lifelong Learning

The pedagogically guided process promotes lifelong learning by initiating the exchange of experiences between older and younger generations and using it for further social or personal processes. Younger people benefit from the lifelong practical experience of older people; at the same time, older people can get to know the life of the younger ones (cf. State Association of Volunteer Agencies Bavaria (Iagfa) 2016, p.5).



Resource Orientation and Empowerment

Learning is enriched by the diverse experiences and knowledge of the generations. Older people often bring valuable life experience to the table, while younger people bring new perspectives. Through intergenerational learning, understanding between the generations can thus be promoted and significantly improved (Iagfa 2016, p.5). It also promotes the self-confidence and self-efficacy (empowerment) of all those involved by actively participating in the learning process.

Basic Requirements for a Successful Intergenerational Event

For most people, the described joint learning in mixed-generation groups is usually not an everyday experience but is usually new and possibly associated with different expectations and perhaps fears.

"Now the question is how to do it with the necessary tact, not just invite, let's talk about sex, that's of course a bit simplistic."

(Participant of the German Never Gets Old Focus Group)

To be able to accompany learning processes with different generations and sometimes very personal or intimate topics, as in the Never Gets Old project, and to be able to exploit the potential that lies therein, thorough preparation and planning is important, which, in addition to all preliminary methodological considerations, considers two fundamental aspects:



- 1. What is the significance of time and space in the design of educational processes in which several generations work in one place and on a common theme?**
- 2. What communicative skills pedagogical actors need to be able to work with such groups?**

Factor Time in Intergenerational Learning Processes

Basically, learning processes, regardless of longer-lasting training courses or one-off one-day events, always take place in the dimension of time. Time is perceived very differently and subjectively evaluated. In mixed-generation groups, the subjective evaluation of time is usually more noticeable and carries more weight: "Some are more precise about punctuality than others, some communicate via fast channels on the Internet – others prefer telephone calls. Some expect the answer to be immediate, others find an answer quickly within a week. Some like to use the free time during the day, in which there are no time constraints due to gainful employment, school, university, training or small children in the house, while others only really have free time available in the evening. Some need longer or earlier break times than the others" (Antz 2009, p. 22f). These differences must be considered in the planning, preparation and implementation of mixed-generation events to consider questions about the appropriate time of day and duration in relation to the reception capacity of the participants. Basically, learning processes always take time; with mixed-generation groups perhaps sometimes a little more to get in touch well and to find trust as a mixed-generation group, to overcome the feeling of being "different, foreign", to feel and show understanding (cf. loc. cit., p. 22f).



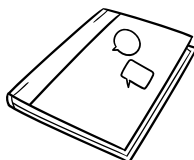
Space as a Factor in Intergenerational Learning Processes

Spaces and their atmosphere have an influence on people's well-being and thus also on their willingness to learn. Knowing about this interrelationship, it is important to design, prepare or select the surrounding space and things in such a way that learning is promoted. For example, concentration, creativity and familiarity may need different environments.



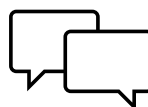
In classic learning settings (schools, seminars), rooms are often designed formally and geared towards teaching. In intergenerational learning processes, it is more important to create a space that promotes togetherness, openness, equality, and respect, thus creating an atmosphere in which all generations feel equal and can actively participate. This aspect should be considered in the preparation of intergenerational events.

Guidelines for Interior Design



- **Participation in the interior design:** Participants are invited to participate in the design. This creates a sense of belonging and ensures that the space meets everyone's needs. Personal items, pictures or decorations that reflect the diversity of generations can create a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Group dynamics and seating arrangements:** Seating arrangements that allow for an open round (circle or U-shape) promote dialogue and mutual visibility. Avoidance of hierarchies: Seats should not signal hierarchies, e.g. through different chairs or positions.
- **Outdoor areas:** can be included, if possible, to loosen up the learning process and integrate experiences of nature.
- **Theme-related design:** Design of the room according to the theme of the learning process (e.g. environment: natural materials, plants as elements; History: old photos or artifacts).
- **Flexibility through mobile elements:** Mobile tables, chairs and whiteboards make it easy to adapt to different activities as needed.
- **Active use of the space:** integration of activities to promote interaction: participants design the space themselves (e.g. brainstorming stations, pin boards or creative corners).
- **Reflection and feedback:** Use of the space for reflection: e.g. setting up a feedback corner or a corner for personal notes, where participants can record their impressions.
- **Technology and media:** Interactive technologies such as smartboards, tablets or other interactive media can facilitate exchange between generations, especially if different technological skills are available.
- **Technology-free zones:** It also makes sense to create areas where technology is switched off to encourage face-to-face exchange.
- **Safe space for exchange and confidentiality:** The space should be designed in such a way that participants feel safe to share personal experiences.
- **Common learning materials:** e.g. posters, worksheets, reflection sheets, etc., which remain in the room for the duration of the learning event. This strengthens cohesion and makes the room a lively place of learning.
- **Respectful atmosphere:** active listening and appreciation are essential as well as the agreement of clear rules for dealing with each other; e.g. according to the topic-centered interaction, which underlines the self-responsibility of each individual person (cf. Langmaack et.al. 1998, p. 98)

Shaping Communication and Interaction



In an increasingly diverse society, it is important to design learning processes in such a way that people of different ages can learn together and benefit from each other. Intergenerational learning processes offer the opportunity to combine knowledge, experience and perspectives of different age groups. For these processes to be successful, the design of communication and interaction plays a central role.

The following aspects should be considered:

- **Respect and appreciation:** All age groups should treat each other with respect, which means acknowledging each other's experiences, attitudes and opinions. Support in the **appreciation of diversity**, i.e. the recognition of different experiences and perspectives, is the task of the group management. It was intended to encourage participants to contribute their perspectives and learn from each other.
- **Active listening:** By repeating what we have understood and reassuring us that we have understood it correctly, we show attention and a genuine interest in the contributions of others. In addition, misunderstandings can be avoided.
- **Equal culture of discussion through common rules:** It should be ensured that all participants have the opportunity to contribute without being dominated. For this purpose, it makes sense to determine together how everyone wants to talk to each other (e.g. let them finish, no interruptions, respectful language). The joint development of the rules creates a positive culture of discussion
- **Clear and understandable communication:** Language and expression should be chosen in such a way that they are understandable to everyone. Enquiries are welcome and will be explained if necessary. Language that is understandable to all also breaks down barriers to active participation. It can be useful to include different media and formats in the learning process in order to take into account different learning and communication styles (visual learning type, auditory learning type, kinaesthetic/motor learning type, communicative learning type).
- **Incorporate regular reflections:** participants should be given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and togetherness repeatedly in the process. This promotes awareness of respectful communication.
- **Patience and tolerance:** Both should be exemplified by the group leader, and the group should also be encouraged again and again to show understanding for different learning

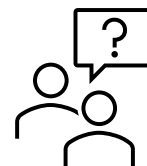
and communication speeds as well as cultural backgrounds. Differences in tempo and expression are part of life and finding a way to deal with them is part of the learning process.

- **Establish a feedback culture:** participants are encouraged to give and accept constructive feedback to continuously improve communication. Criticism should be formulated in a friendly and respectful manner to promote a positive learning atmosphere. This includes first-person statements ("I was irritated by your statement because...") instead of "you" messages ("But you can't say that like that!")
- **Conscious avoidance of prejudice:** Recognizing stereotypes and prejudices and actively countering them to create an inclusive atmosphere.
- **Openness and empathy:** The group leader can be a role model through active listening, respectful language that shows understanding and uses, for example, elements of non-violent communication (cf. Rosenberg et al. 2006). In the learning process, the participants are repeatedly invited to engage with the perspectives of others and to develop an understanding of different points of view. This process can be stimulated by changing perspectives, questions from the field of solution-oriented questions.



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Solution-Oriented Questions to Promote Empathy Skills



Change of perspective question	Aim of the question
„What would a person from another generation say in your situation?"	It encourages people to take the point of view of another age group and to develop understanding
"If you looked at the situation from the perspective of another group member, what would you think?"	It promotes empathy and understanding of different experiences and opinions.
"How could someone who thinks or feels completely different see this situation?"	It helps to break down prejudices and to recognize the diversity of perspectives.
"Think 20 years ahead: What would your future self advice you to do when they look at the situation?"	It encourages us to look from a future, wiser perspective and to recognize solutions.
"If you look at the situation from an outsider's point of view, what do you notice?"	It enables a distanced view and can bring new insights.
"What would a person you admire do in that situation?"	It inspires us to reflect on positive role models and their approaches.

These questions are helpful in broadening the view, promoting understanding and supporting open, respectful communication.

Conclusion

Intergenerational learning is based on the principle that different age groups share valuable experiences, knowledge and perspectives with each other. It is significant because it promotes exchange between different generations, creates understanding and empathy, and strengthens social bonds (Franz 2010, p. 28). It is crucial to consciously design communication and interaction in intergenerational learning processes, which contributes to looking at different perspectives in a non-judgmental way, breaking down barriers and enabling joint learning at eye level.



Through good planning, which considers central organizational aspects such as room design and the subjective meaning of time, as well as the described requirements for good communication, cross-generational learning helps to break down prejudices and pass on knowledge and experience. This not only expands individual knowledge but also strengthens social cohesion. Overall, intergenerational learning is a valuable contribution to an inclusive and respectful community. This creates a valuable exchange that supports both individual and social development.

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SPEED-DATING APPROACH AND KEY-PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 4

AUTHOR: THE LEARNING EDGE VENTURES (VANESSA SYMEONIDOU)



“Speed dating is a great example of how a concept that started as a social practice for creating romantic connections has evolved into a powerful tool for learning, collaboration, and dialogue.”

(IDS Guide page 38)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Understand the historical evolution of the speed-dating method and its transformation into an educational tool.

Recognize the method’s potential for promoting dialogue, empathy and intergenerational connection, especially in the context of gender and sexuality.

Gain practical insights into facilitating speed-dating discussions effectively.

Comprehend the key principles that ensure successful and inclusive speed-dating sessions.



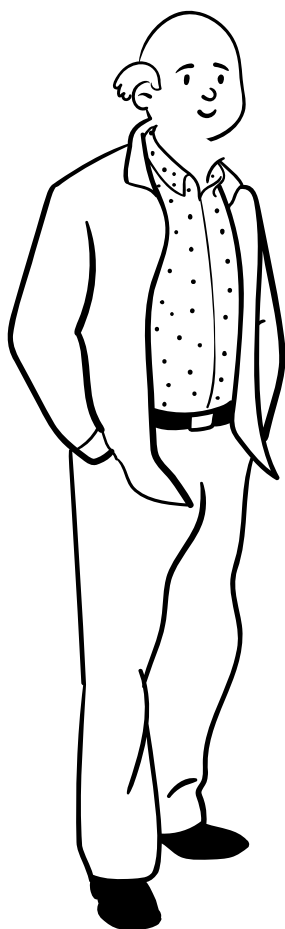
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Introduction

This chapter offers an exploration of the Speed Dating method, viewed here as an innovative tool for education, social interaction, and intergenerational empowerment. Focusing on how this method is integrated into the Never Gets Old project, it brings together both theoretical and practical insights to demonstrate how speed dating can serve as a structured and inclusive approach to discussing gender, identity, sexuality, and aging.

Drawing on key points from the article *From Romance to Rocket Science: Speed Dating in Higher Education* (Muurlink & Poyatos Matas, 2011), as well as from more recent applications in academic and community settings, the text traces the method's journey from a social ice-breaker to a meaningful model of dialogue and collaboration.

This section outlines the core thematic uses of speed dating in educational practice, provides step-by-step guidance for implementation, and highlights key principles that ensure the method's integrity and inclusivity. Its purpose is to support the use of speed dating in the project's Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions (IDS), offering facilitators and participants a practical tool for empathy, reflection, and genuine connection.



“Your project is very important for us because we will have better treatment from the health professionals and therefore from the whole society. This is a way of our feelings to be heard and our lives to be improved” – Feedback from Never Gets Old Focus Group Participant

“It’s good to connect with older people, but I want to talk to younger people to see what they think about all the progress on gender and homosexuality.” – Feedback from Never Gets Old Focus Group Participant in France

Historical Background of Speed Dating

The term “Speed Dating” first appeared in 1998, introduced by its creator Rabbi Yaacov Deyo. At the time, it referred strictly to a romantic concept (Olav Muurlink & Cristina Poyatos Matas, 2011), but it quickly evolved, taking on new meaning and purpose. Today, speed dating has become a valuable tool not only in education but also in fields like psychology and medicine.

Historically, the method was first used at Pete’s Café in Beverly Hills, where Rabbi Deyo organized short meetings to bring together Jewish men and women with the hope of finding potential romantic relationships. Not long after, the structured format caught the attention of educational institutions and was used as a learning strategy. The method's core format of rotating dialogues between pairs, proved effective in building meaningful exchanges and making it a perfect fit for academic and research concepts.

Since 2005, speed dating has been adopted by universities and research centres to promote interdisciplinarity and collaboration. As it continues to move into more social and educational settings, it’s opening up new opportunities - particularly for intergenerational and intersectional conversations that might not happen otherwise.



Speed Dating Evolution as an Educational Tool

Speed dating is a great example of how a concept that started as a social practice for creating romantic connections has evolved into a powerful tool for learning, collaboration, and dialogue. According to the article *From Romance to Rocket Science: Speed Dating in Higher Education*, this transformation into an educational method can be traced through six key thematic areas, or “clusters,” where the approach has found meaningful and diverse applications.

Fostering Interdisciplinary and Networking

Speed dating is often used to spark meaningful exchanges between students or researchers from different fields. In doing so, it encourages interdisciplinary thinking and the blending of knowledge across subject areas. Rid and Shaw (2005) even referred to this approach as “speed networking.” Within the Never Gets Old project, this same idea is applied to bridge generational and intellectual gaps by creating space for different ages and backgrounds to come together and deepen understanding around issues of sexuality and gender in later life.

Real life example of the method effectiveness:

At UC Berkeley, the Centre for Integrated Nanomechanical Systems had a problem on how to get professors from eleven different departments to work together. They set up a “speed-dating” style event, where postdocs and students from six departments had quick, timed conversations to share ideas. In just two hours, they came up with 45 research proposals. (Grossman, 2005).

Speed Dating as an Icebreaker for Researchers

Speed dating can be a great way to ease into difficult conversations, especially among researchers. This approach helps break the ice, making it easier for people to overcome the initial awkwardness that often comes with discussing sensitive topics. In the context of Never Gets Old, where themes like sexuality in older age or gender identity might feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar, speed dating gives participants the space and confidence to open up. It creates a safe, supportive environment that encourages sharing and helps build trust.

Real life example of the method effectiveness:

At the University of Manchester’s Marie Curie Conference, speed dating was used as a structured icebreaker to facilitate informal connections among researchers from diverse backgrounds, and it proved effective in reducing initial social awkwardness, encouraging spontaneous dialogue, and creating a relaxed atmosphere that supported deeper engagement throughout the event.

Speed Dating to Improve Classroom Dynamics for Students

Within the framework of teaching, the method is applied to improve classroom dynamics. Through the continuous alternation of conversation partners, interaction and participation are enhanced. Students practice argumentation, listening, and communication, while at the same time a sense of familiarity and acceptance is cultivated within the group. Similarly, in the Never Gets Old project, the use of this method helps create an equal and inclusive learning environment. Older adults gain space for expression, while younger participants are trained to listen actively and respect different perspectives.

Speed Dating to Connect the University to the Commercial World

In many cases, the method is used to connect the academic field with the business world. Students or researchers come into contact with company representatives in order to exchange information, present ideas, or be informed about employment and internship opportunities. This interactive form of connection bridges the gap between theory and practice, creating new prospects for collaborations and practical solutions.

Real life example of the method effectiveness:

Speed networking has been effectively used in career-focused university programs to help students build industry connections, practice networking skills, and access job opportunities

Speed Dating to Hunt for Funding or Research Collaboration

The method is used strategically for seeking funding opportunities or partners in research projects. In environments where researchers are called to develop project proposals, the ability to quickly present ideas and exchange information enables the connection of individuals with complementary expertise.

Real life example of the method effectiveness:

At Cornell Speed Dating Event, 85% of participants met at least one potential collaborator. (Holmes, 2009).

Speed Dating to Find Research Supervisors

All six iterations of academic speed dating are similar to their romantic ancestor not just in format, but also in motivation: to bring people together. (Olav Muurlink & Cristina Poyatos Matas, 2011) Another particularly useful application is the use of the method for matching students with potential supervisors. Postgraduate or doctoral students have the opportunity to speak with several professors in a short period of time and form an opinion about their suitability as mentors. Likewise, professors gain an understanding of the students' interests and skills, enhancing the quality of future collaboration.

Practical Instructions for Speed Dating Discussions – Dos and Don'ts

Dos

Activity	Description
Select Participants Carefully	Recruit an even number of participants to maintain the pair format. Inform participants in advance about the nature of the activity, its objectives, and the topics.
Arrange the Meeting Room Properly	Book a quiet, comfortable, fully accessible space suitable for successive one-on-one conversations. Chairs must be arranged face-to-face in pairs, with open space provided for seat rotation.
Fulfil the Role of the Facilitator	Ensure the smooth flow of the session and support the participants. Introduce the goals of the activity, explain the process, and encourage active participation. Monitor the group dynamic and freely intervene when necessary. Adapt examples.
Choose Appropriate Topics and Questions	Provide open-ended questions, free of bias. Participants may choose from a list of questions or engage in free conversation.
Avoid Heteronormative Assumptions and Allow Participants to Skip Questions	Be extra sensitive for people potentially belonging to LGBTQ+ community. (e.g., say “partner” rather than “husband/wife”). Make sure you are trained in inclusive language
Include Reflection Exercises	At the end of the session, include a short reflection exercise. Such a practice enhances understanding and fosters sustainable collaboration after the activity (Laprise, R., & Thivierge, R. L., 2012).
Collect Feedback Effectively	Use anonymous questionnaires, small group discussions, or individual interviews for feedback collection. Participants evaluate the activity more positively when given the space to speak and suggest improvements. (Tynan, 2022)

Don'ts

Activity	Description
Don't Fail to Inform and Guide Participants	Do not leave participants without guidance or information about what will follow.
Do Not Ignore the Need for Adaptation	Ensure that the session is inclusive in every aspect.
Do Not Insist on Using Rigid Topics	Allow room for flexibility. Some topics may be sensitive and require adaptation.
Do Not Overlook Signs of Fatigue or Disengagement	Observe discreetly and allow temporary withdrawal.
Do Not Make Judgments	The experience must be non-competitive, non-evaluative, and respectful.

The speed-dating method can serve as a tool for empowerment and transformative learning only when applied with respect, consistency, and pedagogical care.



Key Principles

A set of fundamental principles plays a significant role in the successful implementation of a speed dating session. Although sufficient and precise literature on these principles has not been identified, the article *From Romance to Rocket Science: Speed Dating in Higher Education* implies them through its focus on accessibility, interdisciplinarity, and the enhancement of dialogue. Below, we present five principles that we identified and consider fundamental to be included during a speed dating session:

Equality of Participation

All participants regardless of age, gender, experience, or role are treated as equal conversation partners. Everyone's voice holds equal value.

Empathy & Safety

The environment should encourage the expression of experiences without fear of judgment. Creating a safe space relies on trust, discretion, and acceptance.

Diversity & Inclusion

The method should be adapted to reflect the composition of the participants: age, sexuality, cultural background, language, and physical abilities.

Intergenerational Exchange

The essence of the method is the exchange of experiences and perceptions between generations. It is not about one generation teaching the other but about mutual learning.

Transformative Dialogue

The goal is not simply to share information, but to foster understanding. Learning emerges from sharing, not just from delivering. (Muurlink & Poyatos Matas, 2011)

Glossary of Key Terms



Transformative Dialogue:

A process where participants engage not just to share facts but to listen, challenge assumptions, and experience personal change through conversation (Muurlink & Poyatos Matas, 2011)

Intergenerational Exchange:

Mutual learning between individuals of different age groups,

Empathy:

The capacity to understand and feel the emotional perspective of others even when lived different experiences.

Inclusive Language:

Language that respects all identities.

Conclusion

The Speed Dating method, originally designed for interpersonal matchmaking, has evolved into a dynamic and flexible tool for learning, social connection, and intergenerational exchange. Looking back at how it developed, it becomes clear that Speed Dating offers a powerful way to boost participation and foster communication.

Speed dating takes a new, transformative social and educational role within the Never Gets Old project. It becomes a useful tool for inclusion, empowerment, and eliminating gender and age stereotypes with the correct modifications and an understanding approach to generational, cultural, and existed differences.

This approach can be one of the most significant ways of bridging generations, life stories, and points of view when it is carefully carried out and guided by solid principles. In this manner, speed dating is a mindset of learning and human connection rather than just a technique.

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INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE SESSIONS

PRACTICAL GUIDE

CHAPTER 5

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"Sexuality wasn't talked about, it was somehow dirty and, of course, for many people our age and older, it was still in their bones. So, the first step is really the most difficult. Going there and simply overcoming this old paradigm. [...] that we learn through encounters that it's not as bad as we think it is to talk about sexuality."

(Participant of the German Never Gets Old Focus Group, March 2025)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Learned how to plan and organise intergenerational events, including defining objectives, choosing accessible locations and suitable times, and contacting diverse target groups.

Understood the roles and methods for facilitation, including moderation, icebreakers, dialogue sessions, and flexible adaptation to participants' needs.

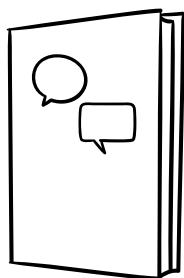
Highlighted the role of diversity and inclusivity, ensuring events consider different ages, backgrounds, abilities, and identities to create a safe, respectful, and enriching learning environment.



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Introduction



The following section combines the theoretical background from chapters 1 and 2 and the methodological principles from chapters 3 and 4 into a compact workshop guide that should enable readers to implement the intergenerational dialogue sessions easily and clearly. Chapter 6 presents a model process for the impact assessment, from preparation and implementation to follow-up and reflection.

Planning the Event

The workshop leaders should familiarise themselves with the topic in advance of the events, the chapters in this guide provide a good basis for this. In addition, there are other practical aspects of planning, such as contacting the target groups, which are discussed below.

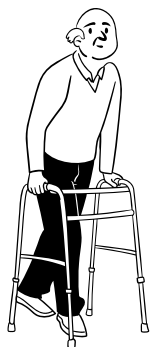
Clarify Expectations and Customise the Event

Intergenerational events aim to allow generations to learn from each other: The exchange of perspectives and experiences, dialogue and personal contact are therefore the central objectives. The event should also provide the opportunity for different opinions to exist. A learning effect is achieved when there is no attempt to convince the other person in a debate, but when the other side can understand how the person has arrived at their opinion through their biographical experiences without having to share it themselves. Depending on the context and situation, it may be appropriate for the workshop leaders to adapt the process to their specific needs and objectives. The guidelines thus provide a basic framework that can be modified as required to best suit the participants. For example, the content of the questions can be adapted so that they match the set objective of the discussions and the prior knowledge of the participants. For example, if an intergenerational discussion takes place in a more conservative environment, the topic should be introduced more carefully than if the event takes place in a nursing school or a queer centre, where the participants already have a higher degree of openness and prior knowledge.

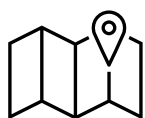


Be mindful of the context of your event and needs of the participants and adapt questions and methods accordingly.

Choice of Place and Time



The location and time of the event are of great importance, as they have a direct influence on accessibility and willingness to participate. To ensure that as many people as possible are able to attend, we recommend adhering to the following framework points as far as possible:



Location: The location should be centrally accessible and ideally well connected to public transport. Barrier-free locations that are accessible with a wheelchair or walking frame should be favoured. Barrier-free toilets should be available,

because even if a location is theoretically accessible for a person in a wheelchair, the lack of suitable sanitary facilities makes it difficult or even impossible to participate without stress. The room should also be attractively designed and offer a quiet environment in which trusting conversations can unfold well. It is advisable to offer small refreshments such as drinks and snacks.



Time: When choosing the time of the event, the possibilities of the target groups should be considered and a time slot chosen that is most likely to allow them to participate. Country-specific and cultural conventions must be considered here;

for example, the target group in Portugal tends to take part in events during their working hours in the morning in order to have time for their families in the evening. In the German context, this tends to be the other way round; working people tend to attend events in the evening because they are often unable to attend them during their working hours. As the guide is also aimed at young professionals who may still be in training and spend the first half of the day at their training centre, it is a good idea to choose a date in the early evening, which can be combined with a dinner together. At weekends, an event can take place in the afternoon, possibly in combination with coffee and cake. If there are already many interested people, the time can be determined in dialogue with the participants. The older participants are probably mostly retired, but they may still have other commitments or are still working. In the German context, it is therefore advisable to choose a date in the early evening or after specific consultation with the participants. However, depending on country-specific habits, a morning appointment may also prove to be more favourable.

Tips for Location and Date	
Choice of Location	• Ensure good accessibility and connections to public transport • Favour low-barrier locations that enable participation with aids such as wheelchairs and walking frames • Design the room attractively and ensure a quiet environment • Make sure the room temperature is comfortable • Provide refreshments such as drinks and snacks
Choice of Date	• Consider the time capacities of your target group - when are they most likely to have free time? • On working days, favour early evening appointments if the employees are not given permission to attend the event during their working hours. If they do get permission, morning appointments are also possible • Possibly combine this with a meal together • Announce the date as early as possible so that participants can be recruited early and can schedule it themselves

Contact Target Groups

Think about who you want to approach at an early stage and collect contacts for your target groups. You can do this by making personal approaches and posting notices, but also by deliberately contacting associations and existing groups and involving local networks. For example, if there is already a centre for LGBTIQ+ people, a nursing school or intergenerational meeting points in your region, it is worth contacting them. Regarding the continuation of the project, it is also useful to get in touch with relevant groups at an early stage that have an interest in the project's objectives and could continue to use the materials independently afterwards.



Also use a variety of ways to publicise your request, even if more older people are using social media such as Instagram, most people there are from the younger generation. For example, print out your request as a flyer, call groups and organisations personally or place an advert in the newspaper. Also try to include diverse perspectives and groups of people, such as people with different levels of education, because the diversity of perspectives enriches our project material and contributes to a comprehensive overall picture

and appeals to a broad group in their reality of life. Adapt your explanation of the event to the specific target group so that it can be understood equally well by people with different levels of prior knowledge. If possible, be open to the fact that some older people may not use an email address. Offer these people the opportunity to obtain information by telephone or post. For this purpose, it can be helpful to create a contact list at an early stage to keep an overview.

Tips for Finding Participants

Define your target groups and contact them appropriately. Use suitable forms of contact.

Use your local network to reach your target group, for example by contacting a nursing school, a centre for the elderly, an education centre or an LSTBIQ+ association. This collection of stakeholders will be useful to you later when you are consolidating the project results.

Consider diversity in your contact requests. The project benefits when people from different backgrounds encounter each other.

Keep a contact list to maintain an overview and to be able to quickly send interested people information about the event or project.

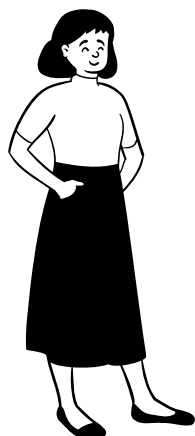
Determine Moderation and Assign Roles



Good moderation is important for a successful event. Before the IDS sessions are held, fixed moderation roles are assigned for the framing of the event. Moderation can be carried out by one or more people. It is important to allocate tasks in advance so that there is no confusion during the event. The moderator does not take part in the discussions themselves but

looks after the external framework and structure. They introduce the key questions, keep an eye on the time and welcome and say goodbye to the participants. The moderator should have a non-judgemental and open attitude towards the topics of sexual and gender diversity in old age and strive for open discussions by inviting changes of perspective and reflection.

Wiedemann (2024) recommends that facilitators pay attention to three aspects in intergenerational learning:



1. Reflect on Your Own Role

Put aside your own generational affiliation and adopt a neutral position between the generations.

2. Flexibility

Consider the needs and ideas of the different generations and make compromises possible.

3. Use Your Own Resources

Exchange ideas with colleagues to introduce your own methods and build on your own experiences with different generations

Programme of the Event

Icebreaker Methods

A trusting and respectful atmosphere is important for the success of the Intergenerational Dialogue Session. For example, there should be enough time to arrive and get to know each other. Before the actual exchange of content in pairs, a relaxed get-to-know-you activity is favourable. Two examples are given below; other methods can also be used to facilitate a dynamic introduction. The methods presented here are taken from the publication "Generations learn together" (Scheunpflug et al., 2009) and are adapted to the settings of the IDS methodology.

First ice-breaker method example is: "Introduction with Objects"



**Second example is
"Generational Symbols"**

Method	"Introduction with Objects"
Possibilities	Starting with objects can facilitate the beginning of a thematic unit or the start of a group phase and motivate all participants to make a personal contribution
Background	Starting with objects gives all participants the opportunity to express themselves about their object. Objects often stimulate associations and can therefore promote dialogue processes. This is important since one group, in intergenerational contexts usually the younger or the older group, is numerically superior to the other. Such a dominance of one group can be seen, for example, in the contributions made. Introductory methods using objects make it possible for all participants to use these objects to reflect on and express their ideas and previous experiences of the topic being addressed. Objects and symbols can be chosen that are relevant to the topic of sexuality, gender and diversity, but more general objects can also be selected, allowing the group to get to know each other independently of the project topic.
Procedure	<u>Preparation:</u> The objects are distributed in the centre of the group, for example in the middle of the circle of chairs or the table. These can be everyday objects or pictures, photos, postcards, symbols or cards with sayings or quotes. <u>Realisation:</u> The participants spontaneously choose an object that they feel best fits the topic or question, that they can use to express something, that they can use to communicate their experiences and expectations or that reminds them of something. Once all the participants have chosen an object, they take it in turn to explain why they have chosen this particular object, what they associate with it and what it has to do with the common topic. If several participants want to take an object, they can talk about it one after the other.
Examples	 • "Say in one sentence why you have chosen this object." • "Using your chosen object, tell us something about where you come into contact with other generations and what you associate with it." The method can also be used as a method of reflection or, using historical photographs or index cards with historical events or dates, as an introduction to biographical learning processes.
Number of participants	Can be organised flexibly. From a group size of more than 16 people, the exchange should take place in small groups.
Time frame	Depending on the size of the group and the question, about 20 - 40 minutes
Material	The following objects can be used as stimulating and varied material: • compiled postcards • objects with a symbolic character • objects from nature • objects from the conference centre • assembled sayings on cards
Other tips and hints	Storytelling sessions that are too long can be tiring. If the storytelling session becomes too long, it is a good idea to break it up with relaxation exercises.

Method	"Generational Symbols"
Possibilities	The generational symbols enable a personal, emotional approach to the topic of generations.
Background	Identification with a generation - especially a historical and social generation - also occurs via objects that are used within a generation for identification and to which a collective or individual symbolic character has been or is attributed over time (e.g. in Germany, kidney tables, dungarees, anti-nuclear stickers, iPods). Objects selected by the participants themselves have a high emotional association and recognition value as generational symbols. In inter-generational groups, they make it easier to localise oneself in a generation and also to talk about it. The playful way in which they are used usually also creates a lot of fun in a group.
Procedure	<u>Preparation:</u> The participants are asked beforehand to bring along an object that symbolises their generation. The task leaves open which phase of the participants' lives this object comes from, as the selection of a single object is always subjective and completely reductive. <u>Realisation:</u> The participants distribute the generational objects they have brought with them around the room on the floor or on the table. After a brief opportunity to look at these objects, the discussion about the symbols and their meanings begins. If the group size is too large for a joint discussion, the objects can be grouped together to form small groups for the discussion. The discussion can be structured by introducing guiding questions.
Examples	Key questions for a presentation of the objects in a plenary session as well as for as well as for the exchange in the small groups: • "I have just brought this object because ..." • "I personally associate it with ..." • "This represents my generation because ..." 
Number of participants	Can be organised flexibly. From a group size of more than 16 people, the exchange should take place in small groups.
Time frame	About 20 - 40 minutes depending on group size
Material	The items brought along
Other tips and hints	Storytelling sessions that are too long can be tiring. If the storytelling session becomes too long, it is a good idea to break it up with relaxation exercises.

Main activity: Intergenerational Dialogue Session



Before conducting the dialogues, it is advisable to carefully read the key principles and recommendations from Chapter four "Speed-Dating Approach and Key Principles" to use them as a supplement to the practical instructions presented here.

Method	"Intergenerational Dialogue Session"
Possibilities	The method enables personal dialogue between members of different generations on a wide range of topics. The participants get to know each other on a more personal level.
Background	As described in chapter 4, the speed dating method has developed into an innovative educational tool. In the "Never Gets Old" project, the method promotes dialogue, empathy and intergenerational connections, particularly regarding gender, sexuality and age. The aim is to support participants in intergenerational dialogue sessions. It facilitates difficult conversations and promotes an inclusive learning environment by providing an opportunity for all participants to express themselves and focussing on sharing and perspective-taking.
Procedure	<u>Preparation:</u> The seating arrangement in the room is prepared so that everyone sits opposite each other. This can be done in different ways, for example 1. An inner and an outer circle is formed with chairs 2. Two people sit opposite each other at a long table 3. Pairs of chairs are distributed around the room <u>Realisation:</u> The speakers pose a question to the group and the pairs then have 5-10 minutes to discuss it. Depending on the complexity of the question or any clarification of terms required in advance, the time can also be extended to allow for good discussions. The expiry of the time is indicated by a signal such as a bell. Afterwards, one of the two people changes seats in response to a signal, while the other remains in place. It should be determined in advance which people will move on in order to maintain the mix of generations, for example, it is recommended that the younger people change seats while the older ones remain seated. The session can be ended after a set number of questions or when the people who have moved on return to their first dialogue partners. A short concluding section can then be added in which this pair is given a short time to discuss their impressions and feelings at the end of the activity.
Number of participants	Maximum of 20 participants, so that 10 pairs can be formed
Time frame	Depending on the number of questions asked, about 30 to 60 minutes or more if you want to allow for a slower pace and more depth.

Material	• Prepared questions, also in visual form • Bell • Chairs and tables if necessary • Drinks and snacks
Other tips and hints	• The questions should also be visualised, for example in a presentation or printed out and numbered on the tables. This makes it easier, especially for people with hearing impairments or to understand the questions quickly. In addition, make sure there is enough space between the pairs of chairs so that the participants can still understand each other well despite the volume level. • Make sure that mobility is not necessarily linked to age. Younger people may also have limited mobility, in which case it is advisable for older people to move on. • If the number of participants is not even, a discussion can also take place in a group of three, with two participants who always stay together. • Make sure that "intergenerational" does not always have to mean very old and very young, even a dialogue pair in which one person is 80 years old and the other 50 is mixed generational wise. • Possible Variation: If you want you can keep the same pair for two consecutive questions or more to allow a deeper conversation • Include short breaks after each couple of questions

Conclusion of the Event

Finally, time should be planned for reflection methods and feedback. As described in detail in Chapter six, this involves an opportunity for reflection for the participants during the event and the opportunity for reflection and debriefing for the workshop leaders after the event. Chapter six lists specific methods and recommendations that can be carried out with the entire group immediately afterwards.

Remember:

All of this is just a guide: You know your group best!

Feel free to adjust the time, space and questions to suit your target group!



Example Questions for ID-Sessions



The compilation of these questions was derived from the focus groups of the Never Gets Old project. **You can of course come up with your own questions as well.** A follow-up question from chapter 3 can be added if the change of perspective is to be emphasised more strongly and the time frame is available.

Complexity Levels

- **Accessible:** Easy to answer; good for opening a session or warming up the group
- **Moderate:** Requires some reflection; suitable once the group is comfortable
- **Deeper:** More personal or complex; best for established groups or later in a session

Personal Views on Ageing and Self-Image

What does “growing older” mean to you personally?	• Accessible
What is one thing you like about the age you are now?	• Accessible
When you think about your age, what are you most grateful for?	• Accessible
Is there something you can do now that you could not do at an earlier age?	• Accessible
What helped you feel more confident or proud of who you are?	• Accessible
Was there a moment in your life that changed how you see yourself?	• Moderate
What do you think becoming older will be like? Have you made any plans for it?	• Moderate
What did you think growing older would be like when you were younger? How has reality compared?	• Moderate
If you could give one piece of advice about accepting yourself as you are, what would it be?	• Moderate

Why do you think some people fear getting older, and what could help change that?

• *Deeper*

Intergenerational Dialogue and Experiences

What is something you have learned from someone much older or younger than you?

• *Accessible*

Have you ever seen someone being treated differently because of their age? What happened?

• *Accessible*

Have you ever changed your mind about something after talking to someone from a different generation?

• *Accessible*

What is one thing you wish another generation understood about yours?

• *Accessible*

Maria (22) says older people often tell her she is too young to know what she wants. What do you think about that?

• *Moderate*

If your grandparents or parents were your age today, how do you think they would feel about Pride events or gender diversity?

• *Moderate*

Imagine you are organising a community event for people of all ages. What would you need to think about so everyone feels welcome?

• *Moderate*

In what ways are the challenges faced by older and younger LGBTIQ+ people similar and in what ways are they different?

• *Deeper*

What can younger adults learn from older adults about relationships and identity and the other way around?

• *Deeper*

Sexuality, Intimacy, and Sexual Health	
Do you feel that sexuality is talked about differently today than it was in the past?	● Accessible
What does closeness or connection with another person look like for you?	● Accessible
Who or what shaped the way you first learned about sexuality?	● Accessible
How would you describe what sexuality means to you at your current stage of life?	● Moderate
What role does intimacy, physical or emotional, play in your everyday life?	● Moderate
Do you think the way we deal with our own sexuality and identity affects our mental health? In what way?	● Moderate
Have you ever felt that your sexuality or identity was ignored or dismissed because of your age?	● Moderate
Have you ever been treated differently by healthcare staff because of your age or identity?	● Moderate
What topics related to sexuality and identity in later life do you wish were talked about more openly?	● Deeper
Would you feel comfortable talking to a doctor or carer about your sexual health or identity? If not, what would need to change?	● Deeper
What barriers exist for LGBTQ+ older adults in expressing their sexual identity?	● Deeper
How could healthcare systems do a better job of addressing sexuality in older adults?	● Deeper

Diversity and Identity in Old Age	
What challenges do you think an ageing LGBTIQ+ person faces today?	● Accessible
What advice would you give to caregivers who want to be more sensitive to these topics?	● Accessible
Do you know someone whose identity surprised you? How did you react?	● Accessible
How would you respond if an older family member told you about a gender or sexual identity they had not shared before?	● Moderate
Have you noticed differences in how people talk about ageing depending on gender, background, or sexuality?	● Moderate
What would a care home need to do to provide good care for older LGBTIQ+ residents?	● Moderate

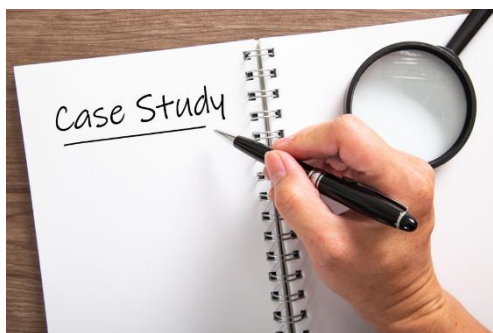
Media, Culture, and Social Perception	
Can you think of a film, advert, or TV show that shaped how you see older people?	● Accessible
Have you ever seen an older LGBTIQ+ person represented in the media? How were they shown?	● Accessible
What image of ageing do you see most often in advertising?	● Accessible
How does the way media portrays ageing affect how people think about sexuality in later life?	● Moderate
Are there stereotypes about older adults and sexuality that you have come across? How do they affect people?	● Moderate
How do cultural or generational differences shape the way people think about sexuality as they age?	● Deeper

Visibility and Safe Spaces	
What does it mean to you to feel seen and recognised for who you are?	● Accessible
How would you describe a safe space for talking about gender and sexuality?	● Accessible
Can you think of a place or situation where you felt truly accepted?	● Accessible
What would you need in a care home to feel safe in your identity?	● Moderate
How should a care home react if there is discrimination among residents?	● Moderate
What can communities do to make their spaces more welcoming for older adults of all sexual orientations and gender identities?	● Deeper

Advice for facilitator

Not every question needs to be used in every session. You can make up your own questions as well; these are just examples. Choose 3–5 questions per category that match your group's comfort level and the session's goals. Start with **Accessible** questions to build trust, then move toward **Moderate** and **Deeper** questions as the group becomes more comfortable.





Case Studies for Discussions

Professionals in health care, social work and education often report feeling unsure about how to address sexuality, consent and LGBTI+ identities with participants, especially in later life and in intergenerational settings. This chapter offers brief practice-based case

studies that can be used as for small-group discussion during Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions or instead of a question. The aim is not to provide “correct” answers, but to support professionals in addressing the topic in an accessible way and provide examples that could be realistically encountered in everyday life. Each case study follows a consistent structure: a short narrative describing a realistic professional situation, a key point highlighting the core issue, and a set of reflection questions for group discussion.

The aim is not to provide “correct” answers, but to support professionals in recognising when boundaries are crossed, to avoid blaming those affected, and to explore inclusive and rights-based responses together.

Each case study follows a consistent structure: a short narrative describing a realistic professional situation, a key point highlighting the core issue, and a set of reflection questions for group discussion.



Case Study 1

“We Are Not Roommates”

Setting: Health and Long-Term Care

Recognising an Older Same-Gender Relationship

Maria (78) and Elise (76) are romantic partners and have shared a small apartment for more than thirty years. When Maria has a minor stroke, she moves into a rehabilitation ward for several weeks. During the admission interview, the nurse asks Maria: “Do you live alone or with family?” Maria hesitates, looks at Elise, and quietly answers: “With my partner.” The nurse smiles and says: “So, she is your roommate. That’s good, it’s important to have company at that age.”

Over the next days, staff repeatedly refer to Elise as Maria’s “friend” or “roommate.” Visiting hours are flexible, but only “family members” are invited to join care planning meetings. Elise is not included, even when decisions about Maria’s discharge and future care arrangements are discussed. Maria does not openly challenge the situation, but she becomes quieter and sometimes refuses physiotherapy sessions.

KEY POINT

In this scenario, the boundary that is crossed is not Maria’s or Elise’s behaviour, but the way the institution fails to recognise their relationship and Maria’s right to decide who should be involved in her care. The repeated misnaming of Elise as “friend” or “roommate” erases a long-term intimate partnership and reinforces heteronormative assumptions about older adults.

Reflection Questions

1. What forms of heteronormativity and ageism are evident in the way staff talk about Maria and Elise? For example, the automatic assumption of a platonic friendship and the erasure of same-sex relationships in old age.
2. How can the team clearly name the boundary that has been crossed, namely Maria's right to define her relationship and her next of kin, without placing responsibility on Maria or Elise?
3. What open, respectful questions could professionals ask in order to clarify Maria's wishes regarding information, consent, and Elise's involvement in her care?
4. What changes to forms, admission procedures, or visiting policies would be needed so that relationships like Maria and Elise's are visible and recognised from the outset?
5. How could you use this case in an IDS group to discuss the right to self-determination in old age and the linguistic visibility of partners, without "outing" or problematising those affected?

Case Study 2

“It Was Just a Joke”

Setting: Education and Social Work

Boundary-Crossing Comments in an Intergenerational Workshop

During an intergenerational workshop on “Changing Images of Sexuality Across Generations,” participants sit in mixed-age small groups. One group includes two older men in their seventies, a social work student in her early twenties, and a mid-career community educator who moderates the discussion.

The conversation turns to dating apps and online flirting. One of the older men, Klaus, laughs and says to the student: “If I were forty years younger, I would swipe right on you immediately!” Several people laugh nervously. Klaus continues: “Don’t worry, I know I’m too old. These days, if you even look at a young woman for too long, they talk about harassment, right?” The student forces a smile but becomes noticeably quieter.

KEY POINT

In this situation, the boundary crossing lies in Klaus’s sexualised comment directed at a much younger participant in a learning setting. The student is not responsible for his comment; her discomfort is a signal that the space is no longer fully safe for her. When facilitators stay silent, the group may interpret this as tolerance of the behaviour, which can normalise subtle harassment and silence those who are affected.

Reflection Questions

1. What power dynamics are at play in this scene (age, gender, role as guest versus facilitator), and how do they contribute to making the comment a boundary crossing for the student, even though it is framed as a “joke”?
2. How could you, as a facilitator, make clear that a boundary has been crossed without devaluing Klaus as a person, for example, by focusing on the effect of the comment rather than his intention?
3. Draft one or two possible sentences you could use to respond immediately, for instance, naming that sexualised comments directed at individuals are not appropriate in this setting and explaining why.
4. What preventive measures (e.g., jointly agreed ground rules about comments on bodies and attractiveness) could help avoid such situations and make clear that responsibility lies with the behaviour, not with those who feel uncomfortable?
5. What might a team debrief look like in which you reflect, without attributing blame to the student or other affected persons, on what support she would have needed and what you would do differently in the future?

Case Study 3

“I feel uncomfortable”

Setting: Health and Social Care

Navigating Consent and Cognitive Impairment

In a residential care home, staff notice that Mr. Novak (82), who lives with moderate dementia, frequently seeks physical closeness with other residents. Sometimes he holds hands or tries to hug them without asking. One afternoon, he is found in the garden sitting very close to Mrs. Zielinski (79), stroking her thigh over her clothing. She appears tense and looks away. When a nurse approaches, she says quietly: “He is just lonely, I don’t want to cause trouble.”

Later, she tells a social worker that she feels uncomfortable but also feels “too old to talk about these things.”

KEY POINT

Here, the crossed boundary is Mr. Novak’s unsolicited physical touch. Mrs. Zielinski’s reluctance is not consent; rather, it reflects how strongly shame, gender roles, and age-related stereotypes can impede older people from speaking about sexual boundary violations. The responsibility lies with the professionals and the organisation to maintain a clear stance on bodily integrity and protection from unwanted contact, even while respecting the right to intimacy and closeness.

Reflection Questions

1. What tensions arise between the right to sexual expression and the right to physical and emotional safety, especially in the context of cognitive impairment?
2. How can professionals make clear that unwanted touching is a boundary violation without blaming Mrs. Zielinski for “not saying anything”? What language could signal to her that her feelings are taken seriously and that she is not “overreacting”?
3. What steps can be taken to protect both Mr. Novak and Mrs. Zielinski, for example, observation, conversations with family members, or adjustments to care plans, without shaming or pathologizing individual residents?
4. What clear guidelines on sexuality, intimacy, and consent would your institution need so that staff have orientation when boundaries are crossed and those affected know they will receive support?
5. How can IDS or other reflective formats help staff work through their own uncertainties about sexuality in the context of dementia, rather than unconsciously transferring those uncertainties to residents?

Case Study 4

“That’s Just a Phase”

Setting: Intergenerational Dialogue

An Intergenerational Family Conversation about a Queer Identity

In an IDS session hosted at a community centre, participants are invited to share stories about “important conversations” in their families. In one small group, there is a grandmother, Ingrid (72), her adult grandchild, Leo (24), who identifies as non-binary and queer, and several unrelated participants of different ages.

Leo shares that they recently told their family about having a same-gender partner and using a new first name. Ingrid responds in front of the group: “I love Leo very much, but I still hope this is just a phase. At my age we didn’t have all these labels. I worry that young people are confusing themselves with all this.” Leo looks visibly hurt and falls silent. Some participants nod sympathetically with Ingrid; others look uncomfortable but do not intervene.

KEY POINT

In this example, the boundary crossing is the public questioning of Leo’s identity and relationship in a space that was introduced as supportive and respectful. Leo’s hurt is understandable; it arises not because Leo is “too sensitive,” but because their self-description is directly relativised and pathologized.

Reflection Questions

1. What effects can it have on younger queer people when their identity is described as a “phase” or a “trend” in intergenerational settings?
2. How could you, as a facilitator, intervene to make clear that a boundary has been crossed, for example, by affirming the validity of Leo’s self-description and inviting Ingrid to voice her concerns without denying Leo’s identity?
3. What ground rules or inputs on respectful language (pronouns, names, terminology) could be introduced beforehand to reduce such situations without shaming older participants or portraying them as “backward”?
4. How can a space be created in which Ingrid is allowed to express her uncertainty, while making it clear that Leo’s right to self-definition is not up for debate?
5. What opportunities do IDS offer for making such tensions constructively visible rather than covering up conflicts and how do you avoid queer participants being used as “educational material” in the process?

Case Study 5

“It’s Not Appropriate for their Age”

Setting: Health and Social Care

Two Men in Love in a Nursing Home

In a nursing home, two residents, Mr. Becker (81) and Mr. Ruiz (79), start spending more time together. They eat at the same table, go for walks in the garden and are often seen holding hands. One evening, a care worker notices them sitting closely on the sofa, quietly kissing. A colleague comments later at the nurses’ station: “It’s sweet that they found each other, but I hope the other residents don’t see too much. Some of our residents are very traditional.”

Soon, some residents and family members start making remarks. One daughter complains to the manager: “My mother doesn’t want to share the dining room with such behaviour. This is not appropriate at their age.” In response, the manager suggests that Mr. Becker and Mr. Ruiz should avoid visible displays of affection in common areas “to keep the peace.” Neither man has been asked how they experience the reactions or what they want.

KEY POINT

In this case, the boundary crossing occurs when institutional responses prioritise the discomfort of others over the right of Mr. Becker and Mr. Ruiz to live their relationship openly and with dignity. Their relationship is marked as a problem, while discriminatory comments from family members or fellow residents are barely addressed.

Reflection Questions

1. What message does it send to Mr. Becker and Mr. Ruiz when they are asked to hide their affection while homonegative comments are barely addressed?
2. How could you, as a professional, clearly name that the boundary of non-discrimination has been crossed and that the problem is not the two men's relationship but the rejecting reactions of others?
3. What supportive steps could be taken, for example, a clarifying conversation with critical family members, information sessions on LGBTI+ ageing, or an explicit statement that the facility aims to be a discrimination-free environment?
4. How could the team ensure that Mr. Becker and Mr. Ruiz are actively asked what they wish for and what level of visibility feels safe for them, rather than deciding over their heads?
5. What role could IDS or other dialogue-based formats play in enabling conversations with residents and family members about love, intimacy, and diversity in old age, without "problematizing" the two men's relationship?

Case Study 6

"She Doesn't Like to Be Touched"

Setting: Residential care home for older adults

A nursing assistant notices that Mrs. K., an 82-year-old resident with early-stage dementia, becomes visibly distressed whenever a male colleague assists her with personal hygiene. Mrs. K. repeatedly says, "No, not him," and tries to push the assistant away. The team initially interprets this as general agitation related to her cognitive decline. A colleague suggests that Mrs. K. may simply "not like men."

During a handover meeting, a social worker raises the question whether Mrs. K.'s reaction could indicate a past experience of sexual violence, rather than a general preference. The team feels unsure how to respond: they do not want to make assumptions, but they also recognise that dismissing Mrs. K.'s distress as mere confusion may fail to protect her dignity and safety.

KEY POINT

Mrs. K.'s repeated refusal is a clear expression of her boundaries. Interpreting distress solely as a symptom of dementia risks overlooking a possible history of trauma and undermines her right to bodily autonomy. The professional task is not to diagnose the cause, but to respect the boundary unconditionally and explore trauma-informed approaches to care.

Reflection Questions

1. How can the care team respect Mrs. K.'s expressed boundary immediately, regardless of whether the reason is fully understood?
2. What institutional routines (e.g., staff rotation, documentation) could help prevent situations in which residents' refusals are overridden?
3. What would a trauma-informed approach look like in this specific care setting?
4. How might the team open a conversation with Mrs. K.'s family or legal guardian without making assumptions or breaching confidentiality?
5. What training or supervision would help staff distinguish between cognitive symptoms and expressions of distress rooted in past experience?

Case Study 5

"I Don't Know How to Bring It Up"

Setting: Health education workshop in adult education

A health educator is leading a workshop on well-being and healthy ageing for a group of adults aged 55–75. The curriculum includes a session on sexual health in later life. The educator has noticed that participants engage enthusiastically with topics like nutrition and exercise but become notably silent whenever sexuality is mentioned. When the educator tentatively introduces the session, one participant says, "At our age, that's not really relevant, is it?" Others nod.

The educator suspects that at least some participants do have questions, a small number have approached her privately after previous sessions to ask about topics like changes in libido, pain during intercourse, or how medication affects sexual function. She feels caught between the group's apparent wish to avoid the topic and her professional knowledge that sexual health matters at every age.

KEY POINT

The group's silence does not mean the topic is irrelevant; it may reflect discomfort, internalised ageism, or a lack of safe spaces to discuss sexuality in later life. The private questions some participants have asked confirm that the need exists. The professional challenge is to create conditions in which the topic can be addressed without forcing disclosure, normalising the conversation rather than demanding participation.

Reflection Questions

1. What strategies could the educator use to normalise the topic of sexual health without putting individual participants on the spot?
2. How might ageist assumptions (“sexuality is for younger people”) affect both participants’ willingness to engage and professionals’ willingness to raise the topic?
3. What role do anonymous question formats, written materials, or external speakers play in making sensitive topics more accessible?
4. How can the educator acknowledge the group’s discomfort while still fulfilling her educational responsibility?
5. What institutional or curricular changes would make it easier for educators to include sexual health as a standard part of healthy-ageing programmes?

General Reflection Questions for Professional Practice

The following questions can be used across all case studies or as standalone prompts for professional reflection and team discussion.

1. How have my own experiences, values, and social norms around age, gender, and sexuality shaped the way I interact with older adults and younger participants in professional settings?
2. In my organisation, where do I see practices, documents, or routines that implicitly assume heterosexual, cisgender, or non-disabled norms and how might this affect older LGBTI+ participants?
3. What concrete phrases or questions could I use to invite conversations about sexual health, identity, or consent in a respectful and non-intrusive way?
4. Which forms of support (training, supervision, peer exchange, policy development) would help me feel more confident and competent in addressing these sensitive topics?
5. How can intergenerational dialogue formats like IDS help surface invisible experiences of marginalisation and create space for collective learning about sexuality, consent, and diversity, without placing the burden of education on those who are most affected?
6. How do power dynamics, between professionals and service users, between generations, between genders, shape whose boundaries are taken seriously?
7. What would it look like if my institution had a clear, written policy on residents'/clients' right to sexual expression and intimacy?
8. How can I contribute to a team culture in which colleagues feel safe to discuss uncertainty about sensitive topics without fear of judgement?

Facilitator Guidance: Managing Difficult Topics and Conversations in Group Discussions

Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions (IDS) are designed to create open, respectful spaces where participants of different ages can exchange perspectives on topics that matter to them. However, some of the most valuable learning happens precisely when conversations become uncomfortable, when generational value conflicts surface, when taboo issues are raised, or when a participant shares an unexpected emotional disclosure.

This chapter provides practical guidance for facilitators on how to prepare for, navigate, and follow up on difficult moments in group discussions. The aim is not to avoid discomfort altogether, but to create conditions in which discomfort can become a catalyst for learning rather than a source of harm.

Before the Session: Preparing Yourself and the Group

Effective facilitation of difficult conversations begins before the session starts. Facilitators who take time to reflect on their own responses to sensitive topics are better equipped to remain grounded when emotions run high in the group.

Self-Preparation

Reflect on your own values, assumptions, and emotional triggers in relation to the session topic. Ask yourself: Which aspects of this topic make me uncomfortable? What are my blind spots? Where might my personal views unintentionally influence the group? This kind of self-awareness helps you distinguish between your own reactions and what the group needs from you as a facilitator.

Establishing Ground Rules

Co-creating ground rules with the group at the start of each session gives participants shared ownership of the space. Rather than imposing rules, invite the group to name what they need in order to feel safe enough to speak honestly. The facilitator can then supplement with any principles the group may have overlooked.

Suggested Ground Rules for IDS

- Listen to understand, not to respond or correct.
- Speak from your own experiences.
- Respect that others may hold different values without requiring agreement.
- Confidentiality: personal stories shared in this room stay in this room.
- It is always acceptable to pass; no one is required to share.
- If something is hurtful, name it. The facilitator will support the process.

During the Session: Navigating Difficult Moments

Even with careful preparation, difficult moments will arise. The following principles can help facilitators respond constructively when conversations become tense, emotional, or potentially harmful.

1. Name what is happening in the room.

When tension rises, acknowledge it rather than ignoring it. A simple observation such as “I notice this topic has brought up strong feelings. That makes sense, because it matters” can normalise discomfort and signal that the facilitator is paying attention.

2. Separate impact from intent.

When a participant’s comment causes hurt, focus on the effect rather than the intention. For example: “I can see that comment landed differently than you may have intended. Let’s pause and check in.” This avoids shaming the speaker while validating the experience of those affected.

3. Be comfortable with silence.

When emotions surface, resist the urge to fill every silence. Pauses give participants time to process their feelings and find words for what they want to say. Rushing to move on can signal that emotional expression is unwelcome.

4. Redirect without shutting down.

If a discussion risks becoming harmful, for example, if one participant repeatedly invalidates another’s identity or experience, the facilitator has a responsibility to intervene. Redirect by restating the ground rules and refocusing the group: “We agreed

to speak from our own experience. Let's return to that." This maintains boundaries without silencing the conversation.

5. Respond to emotional disclosures with care.

If a participant shares a personal experience of trauma, discrimination, or loss, acknowledge the courage it took to speak. Do not probe for details, interpret the experience, or invite the group to comment unless the person explicitly wishes to discuss it further. A brief, warm acknowledgement is often enough: "Thank you for sharing that with us. That took courage."

Managing Intergenerational Value Conflicts

Value conflicts between generations can happen in intergenerational dialogue. Older and younger participants may hold different views shaped by different historical, cultural, or social contexts. The facilitator's task is to create conditions for genuine exchange without requiring consensus while maintaining a respectful environment.

Strategies for Value Conflicts

- Frame disagreement as an opportunity: "This is exactly the kind of difference IDS is designed to explore."
- Ask curiosity-based questions: "What experience shaped that view for you?" rather than "Why do you think that?"
- Protect individuals from becoming representatives of their generation: remind the group that no one speaks for all people of their age.
- If a participant's self-definition (e.g., gender identity, sexual orientation) is questioned, intervene to affirm that self-definition is not up for debate, while allowing space for the questioner to express uncertainty without invalidating the other person.

After the Session: Debriefing and Follow-Up

Difficult conversations do not end when the session does. Facilitators should build in time for a structured closing and, where possible, a team debrief.

Closing the Session

Before participants leave, offer a brief round in which each person can share one word or sentence about how they are feeling. This prevents people from leaving with unprocessed emotions and gives the facilitator a sense of where the group stands. End by thanking the group for their willingness to engage with difficult material.

Team Debrief

After the session, facilitators should reflect, alone or with co-facilitators, on what worked, what was challenging, and whether any participant may need follow-up support. Key questions include:

Debrief Questions for Facilitators

- Were there moments where I felt pulled to take sides? What triggered that?
- Did any participant appear distressed or withdrawn after the session?
- Were the ground rules sufficient, or do they need to be revised for the next session?
- Is there anyone I should check in with individually before the next meeting?
- What would I do differently next time?

KEY TAKEAWAY

The goal of facilitation is not to prevent discomfort but to ensure that discomfort is shared, contained, and used as a resource for learning. When facilitators prepare thoughtfully, respond with clarity, and follow up with care, difficult conversations can become the most transformative moments in an Intergenerational Dialogue Session.

Checklist

This checklist can make event planning easier.

Event title:	
Date:	
Place:	
Responsible persons:	

☒ Before the event

Task	Responsible	Deadline	✓
Define goal and concept			
Set up a budget			
Planning the venue			
Clarify technical requirements			
Drinks and snacks			
Contact target groups			
Maintain contact list			
Start advertising			
Prepare material and questions			

 During the event

Task	Responsible	Time of day	✓
Setup & technical check			
Interior design			
Prepare list of participants			
Lay out material			
Reception of the guests			
Icebreaker Method			
Intergenerational Dialogue			
Reflection and feedback			
Conclusion			

 After the event

Task	Responsible	Timeframe	✓
Cleaning the room			
Debriefing in the team			
Evaluation of the participants' feedback			
Send thank you emails			



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IMPACT ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER 6

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“The only purpose of an activity is to provide an opportunity for a debriefing. Learning does not take place during the activity, but during its evaluation in the reflection phase.”

(Thiagarajan & Van den Bergh, 2014)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, readers will have:

Understand the importance of evaluating different aspects of implemented Intergenerational Dialogue Session on three levels.

Be able to collect feedback from participants and organisers, ensuring all voices are heard.

Be equipped to facilitate reflection activities using interactive and inclusive tools.



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Introduction

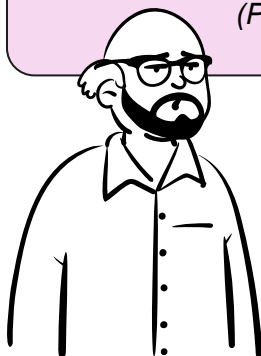
We naturally reflect on activities we do every day, especially when something doesn't go as planned. But it's just as important to take a step back and evaluate things when they go well, so we can understand what worked and build on that success. At the end of an Intergenerational Dialogue Session (IDS), it is essential to assess its impact to reflect the session. To do so, it's good to take a moment to reflect on how things went, what worked well, what could be better or needs to be changed, and how everyone experienced the session. This helps us keep learning, support the continuous improvement of future sessions and make them even more meaningful.



This section provides trainers and facilitators with ideas, practical tools and exercises to evaluate the effectiveness of the IDS from multiple perspectives: participants, organisers, and the individual session context. As a central follow-up element to the Intergenerational Dialogue Sessions, *Never Gets Old* proposes incorporating an evaluation component as the closing part of the workshop. This chapter offers several examples that can be used as group reflection activities. Especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as sexuality, sexual health, or discussions related to the LGBTIQ+ community, this evaluation phase can be particularly meaningful. It helps deepen mutual understanding of the diverse and unique life experiences and perspectives across different groups and generations (BISS e.V., 2024).

“I'm here talking, I've never really talked about these things, I'm here thinking about things. Thank you for letting me participate.”

(Participant from the Never Gets Old Focus Group Portugal)



Impact Assessment and Evaluation

Intergenerational dialogue sessions (IDS) are dynamic and socially meaningful – but without thoughtful evaluation, their impact risks being overlooked or misunderstood. The following sections introduce why evaluation matters, the different levels it can happen on, helpful dos and don'ts, and practical tool recommendations for facilitators.

Why Assess Impact?

Evaluation goes beyond counting participant numbers or checking boxes. It captures emotional, intellectual, and social resonance. It's about learning, improving, and making the invisible visible. As Sánchez (2009) puts it, evaluation should be seen as “a systematic and explicit process, an organised and deliberate effort to gather valid information in order to describe and issue grounded value judgments about a phenomenon” (p. 14). It's about asking: What worked? For whom? In what context? And how can we do better next time?

After organising an IDS – where people from different age groups share personal experiences and perspectives – it can be extremely valuable to follow up with a feedback or group reflection activity. These conversations can be powerful, surprising, and even emotional. During the IDS, participants might hear something that challenges their assumptions, connects with their own experiences, or opens their eyes to a new point of view. Plus, closing activities send a positive signal: your voice matters and you are heard. Taking time to reflect together afterward helps **participants** to:

- Process what they've experienced in a calm and supportive environment.
- Make sense of emotions or unexpected insights that may have come up.
- Share their impressions openly, which can strengthen group connection and learning.
- Give constructive feedback that helps facilitators improve future sessions.

Reflections and feedback also give organisers a chance to see how well the session supported open, respectful dialogue, especially across differences in age, gender, or identity, and whether everyone felt heard and included. Impact assessment allows the **facilitator** to:

- Learn from challenges.
- Recognition and evaluation of learning outcomes.
- Understand and amplify successes.
- Improve future IDS sessions based on participants' feedback.
- Evaluation of inclusivity in relation to age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and social background.
-

Levels of Evaluation

When evaluating an IDS, it's helpful to look at it from three different angles:



At the **participant level**, the focus is on personal experiences: Did people feel included, respected, and heard? Did they gain any new perspectives or insights, especially about age, gender, or identity? For example, a younger participant might share that they hadn't considered how sexuality is experienced in older age, or an older adult might express how meaningful it was to feel truly listened to.



The **organisational level** looks at how the session was facilitated and the “behind-the-scenes experience” of the facilitators: Was the atmosphere welcoming? Did challenges arise, such as tense discussion points or dominating voices? This helps organisers reflect and learn for the next time. For example, facilitators reflect on whether gender-diverse participants were equally active in the discussion.



Lastly, the **session level** zooms out to look at practical and structural aspects: Was the space inclusive and accessible? Was the group balanced in terms of age, gender identity, or background? Did the schedule work well, or did parts feel rushed or too long? Were the seating arrangements or room layout helpful for open conversations? For example, a session may have run well logistically but lacked real dialogue between age groups.

Sánchez (2009) recommends integrating all three levels to get a more accurate picture of the programme's real value and areas for growth. Looking at these three levels together gives a full picture of what worked, what didn't, and how to make future IDS sessions even more effective and inclusive.

General Recommendations

It must be remembered that just like younger generations, the older generation is not one homogenous group. Those involved in IDS might cross three or more generations, while “between generation” means a generation being around 25 years (Generations Working Together, 2011). Guiding, mentoring, and shadowing are valuable techniques that can improve learning experiences for everyone involved. Intergenerational learning isn’t a one-way transfer of knowledge from an “expert” to a younger person – it’s about mutual learning, where each person brings their own insights, experiences, and questions to the table. When generations come together in active exchange, they engage in a form of learning that is dynamic and reciprocal. In the following, based on a literature review, you’ll find some practical **do’s and don’ts** to help you create a positive and inclusive intergenerational learning environment for your evaluation workshop.

Do	Don’t
Plan your evaluation before the session.	Treat evaluation as a formality or paperwork.
Include <u>anonymous</u> feedback options, such as <i>Mentimeter</i> or <i>Kahoot</i> for larger groups.	Focus only on “success stories”: critical voices offer valuable learning.
Do think about the wider picture from the start, including sustainability: what will happen when the activity is finished?	Be overambitious and/or overcomplicate the tools: keep them accessible to all ages and literacy levels.
Involve all parties in discussions before the activity to ensure that your learning objectives are the same as theirs. Discuss fears, queries and worries, if necessary.	Ignore contextual factors (e.g. cultural or emotional tone of the session).
Be attentive to power dynamics and different communication styles; Participants could come from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of differing needs.	Think of older people as one homogenous group. Needs of the younger old will be different from those of the older old.
Agree time involved with participants.	Exclude someone, e.g. minority groups.

Use inclusive language in all tools.	Think disclosure is difficult or an obstacle. It can be a change for learning.
Do create some quiet time for adults and space for the young people to be active.	‘Age-segregate’ the groups: the goal is to learn from each other’s perspective.

When evaluating intergenerational programmes, it's important to look beyond just the activities themselves. Miriam Bernard (2006) suggests that participants should be involved in all parts of the evaluation process, from the planning to the final reflections. This helps them feel valued and truly part of the project, rather than like people being studied from the outside. Even though she doesn't give exact steps, her approach fits with what many call collaborative research, where both the organisers and the participants work together, and both sides benefit from the process (Sánchez, 2009).

Evaluation Tools



Evaluation is crucial to ensure that the intergenerational dialogue session is not only meaningful in the moment but continues to grow in and impact over time. This chapter will provide you with a selection of practical tools and worksheets designed to help facilitators and organisers reflect on the learning process, gather feedback, and assess both

the strengths and areas for improvement in their sessions.

To guide your evaluation process, consider the following: Start by clearly documenting the activity, its aims, and what learning outcomes are expected for everyone involved. Think about your plan: who is meant to benefit, and in what ways? Monitor progress during the session and reflect on what is changing: what worked well, what didn't, and why? Gathering feedback from all participants, including organisers, helps build a fuller picture. Finally, evaluate the project as a whole and identify which elements could be developed further or carried forward sustainably (Generations Working Together, 2011).

In the following pages, you'll find examples of ready-to-use evaluation tools – from simple feedback forms to creative group reflection activities – to support thoughtful and inclusive assessment of your intergenerational work.

IDS Interactive Reflection Exercises

Circle of Impressions for Intergenerational Dialogue

Create a standing or seated circle. Explain that this is a chance for everyone to reflect briefly on their experience and share a takeaway.

Each person shares one word or short sentence that summarises their key takeaway from the session.

“What word describes how you're feeling right now?”

“What's one thing you're taking away from today?”

Variation: Use coloured cards to encourage spontaneous expression (**green** = positive insight or emotion, **yellow** = neutral or something to reflect further on, **red** = critical observation or challenge)

Tips: *End on a hopeful note* – Ask participants to share one thing they will carry with them. *To energise the group, incorporate movement activities* – e.g. Label corners of the room with signs like: “New Insight”, “Still Wondering”, “Inspired to Act”, “Mixed Feelings”; Or use categories like “Stand if you felt heard during the session” etc.

The Learning Journey

This activity encourages participants to reflect on what they've learned or felt during the dialogue session by physically placing themselves along an imaginary spectrum.

Identify a clear space in the room (or outdoors) where participants can stand in a single **horizontal line**. Define two opposite ends of the line:

One end represents “Strongly Agree” | “A lot” | “Very comfortable”

The other represents “Strongly Disagree” | “Not at all” | “Very uncomfortable”

Read a reflection statement aloud, such as: “I feel I understand the perspectives of other generations better now.” “I felt confident contributing to the conversation today.” “I'm motivated to continue conversations like this outside this space.” Participants walk to the place on the line that best represents how they feel about the statement.

Variation: Instead of a line, create a **timeline** labelled with session phases: Start → Middle → Now/End. Ask participants to stand near the part of the timeline where they felt a shift or emotional moment happened for them. Prompt them with questions like: “*At what point in the session did you feel most engaged?*” Once, everyone is positioned, invite a few volunteers to share why they chose that spot.

IDS Feedback Questionnaire

Filled out by Participant after the ID-session

Thank you for participating in our Intergenerational Dialogue Session. Your feedback is vital to help us understand the impact of this session and improve future initiatives. Please take a few minutes to complete this feedback form. Thank you!

Age: _____

Name (optional): _____

Email (optional): _____

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt safe and respected during the session.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The dialogue felt inclusive of diverse identities and experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learned something new about the perspectives of another generation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had space to express myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The session was engaging.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The session was well-organized and clearly structured.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The dialogue helped me reflect on my own assumptions or beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel more connected to people from other generations after this session.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The facilitators supported meaningful and balanced participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflection Questions for Participants

What was the most valuable part of the session for you? Any topic that stood out?

Were there moments that challenged your thinking or perspectives? Please describe.

How did the session impact your views on age, gender, or sexuality?

What could be improved in future sessions?

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

I would like to take part in future activities and receive similar proposals.

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please enter your e-mail address here: _____

Thank you very much for your time and input! 🌸

IDS Reflection Sheet

Filled out by Organiser after the ID-session

Number of Participants: _____

Duration of Session: _____

Date and Place: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

What went well in the session?

Were there any moments of tension or discomfort? How were they handled?

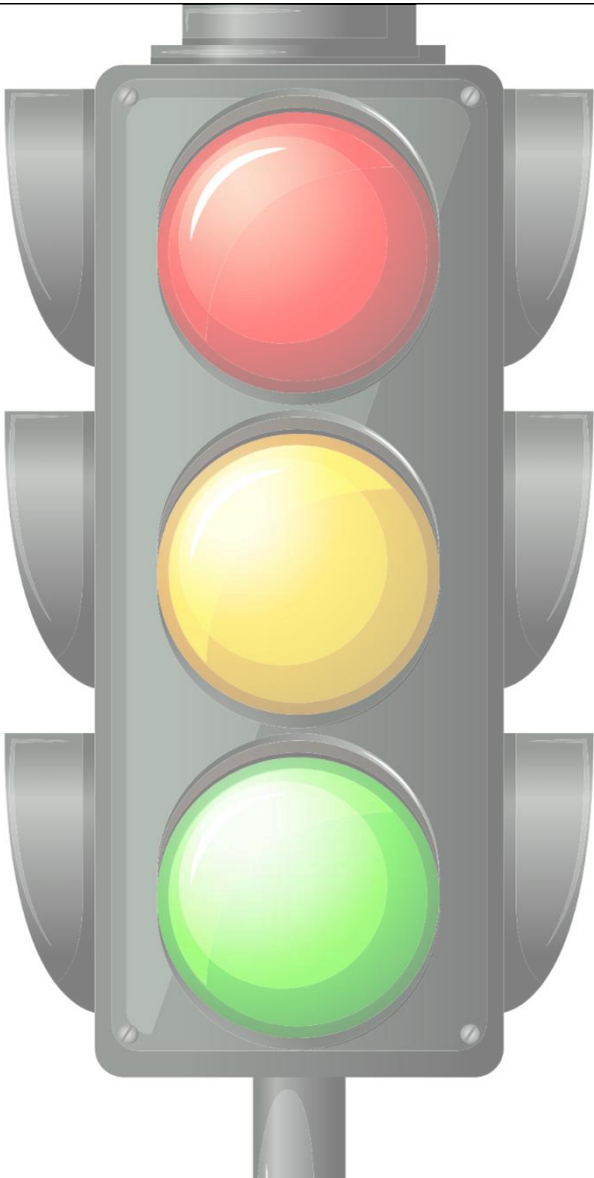
Did all voices feel equally heard and valued?

Were participants from LGBTIQ+ backgrounds? Did they feel included?

How did the intergenerational interaction work? Was it balanced?

Were there unexpected insights or reactions?

What would we do differently next time?

	What should we avoid next time?
	What should we improve?
	What should we keep?

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the importance of evaluation activities as part of any intergenerational dialogue session. We explored why impact assessment matters – not only for improving future practice, but also for valuing the experiences and contributions of all generations involved.

The chapter introduced different levels of evaluation (participant, organisational, and session level), shared practical dos and don'ts, and provided a selection of adaptable worksheets suitable for a variety of settings and group dynamics. Impact assessment is not merely evaluative; it is also transformational. Through feedback and interactive activities, facilitators can help participants to reflect on their own emotions, exchange experiences and improve inclusivity within the group.

Recent research supports the value of intergenerational dialogue as a powerful learning tool. A systematic review by Trujillo-Torres et al. (2023) found that intergenerational learning activities consistently led to positive outcomes across six key areas: improved attitudes and well-being, greater inclusion of vulnerable groups, stronger family relationships, enhanced social and human values, better health awareness, and reduced digital divides between generations. While these programmes require significant commitment from participants and may initially face generational prejudices, the overall benefits highlight the strong potential of intergenerational dialogue as a transformative educational approach.

Looking ahead, there is great potential to deepen our understanding of how intergenerational work shapes personal growth, social cohesion, and community development. The goal of this chapter is to empower workshop facilitators with the tools to reflect, learn, and adapt and ensure that intergenerational sessions remain inclusive, engaging, and impactful for all.

Evaluation activity



- What surprised you during today's session?
- Have your views on another generation changed today? How?
- When did you feel particularly connected to another participant?
- What does "inclusive dialogue" mean to you?
- What would you like to say to someone from a different generation who wasn't here today?

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