

This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism

by Ashton Applewhite

A Study Guide

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by Ashton Applewhite

Welcome!

We're so glad you decided to gather to study Ashton Applewhite's book, "This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism!"

This guide is adapted from one developed for a virtual (online) book study conducted in the fall of 2017, in advance of an appearance by the author as Distinguished Speaker for the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute. We share it in the hope that you will find the resources we gathered for our event useful for your own group.

How it works:

The study is laid out by chapter, starting with the Introduction. We also included a section at the end of the book with information about Ashton Applewhite's speaking engagement for you to use, if applicable.

Each chapter has a brief summary, and three basic sections:

Did You Know contains interesting information and some resources related to the book's content. At times we posted local (and time-sensitive) information. You are encouraged to tune in to your own local aging services community and connect with events of interest to your members as a way to build engagement and expand your learning community.

These Rock, Too! Includes links to videos, books, and articles related to the chapter topic. The videos are all available online and can be viewed between meetings, or make a nice change of pace for your group meeting, especially for your visual learners!

Community Conversation & Pushback is where we list discussion prompts. There are almost always more prompts than you'll be able to use in your group, so think of them as a way to get things started. Let the wisdom of the group and ideas from the book weave their own magic! Our group was comprised mostly of Olders, and the conversation was incredibly rich.

Before the First Meeting:

1. Invite your participants, using your email lists, social media, local newspaper and radio, and whatever other outlets you usually use to publicize events

2. Members will need a copy of the book, which is available here:
<https://thischairrocks.com/store/>
3. If your organization has funding, you might consider purchasing extra books to loan or give to Senior Centers, Offices for Aging, and homes where Olders live to encourage participation in your group.
4. Let participants know your schedule. If you are meeting in advance of Ashton Applewhite appearing in your region, as we did, be sure to leave enough time to promote your book study and pace your group meetings so you end just before she arrives!

(Our pace was one chapter/week, including a week for the Introduction. It deserves one as it is loaded with important stuff!)

5. Encourage participants to join the conversation by sharing their thoughts, comments, and questions. You might consider starting with a Learning Circle (developed by ActionPact) as a way to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak. You can read more about this model at http://actionpact.com/resources/the_learning_circle
6. Consider what guidelines you might need for the group. Ideally, the group creates the guidelines together as part of the first meeting.*

Here is what we created for our virtual group, inviting folks to add to the list:

Guidelines

We're excited about the opportunity to hear your thoughts about and responses to the book, and to hear your own stories, (as you choose to share, or not!).

Please remember that ageism is W I D E and it's deep in our culture. We may experience strong feelings while reading and talking about it.

In order to ensure an experience that benefits everyone who participates, we are committed to creating a safe and inclusive space for the thoughtful exchange of ideas.

By participating, you agree to:

1. Use respectful language in your comments
2. Frame your ideas from your own perspective and speak from your own experience

3. Refrain from making judgments about other people's personal choices when it comes to Elder care options and the like, BUT

DO call out ageism when you see it, whether directed at older people or youth. What we all have to notice and own is that ageism is so pervasive in our culture we all have ageist attitudes and language. We can only overcome it if we help each other, in a thoughtful way. (We'll talk more about this - it's why we're here!)

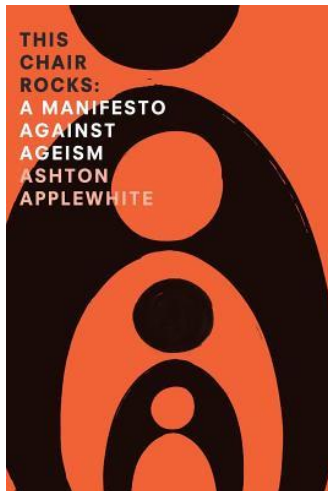
4. Honor confidentiality when sharing stories that may involve other people
5. What else would you or your study members want to add?

**It's usually helpful to write these guidelines out as you brainstorm them, and post for your meetings, if possible.*

Ashton Applewhite's website:

www.thischairrocks.com

Photo by Adrian Buckmaster



Here is the link to purchase the book directly from Ashton Applewhite's website: <https://thischairrocks.com/store/>

Introductory Chapter and Official Welcome (first meeting)

Welcome to our online group to study Ashton Applewhite's book, *"This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism!"* In this introduction, we'll get an overview of Ageism, review how the group will work, and start to get to know each other.

If you haven't ordered your book yet, be sure to get your copy now!

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Ashton Applewhite writes a blog to help us sort out what is ageist and what isn't, and why?

She calls out ageism when she sees it, and pushes back, on "Yo, is This Ageist?" Check it out on her website at <http://yoisthisageist.com/>

THESE ROCK, TOO!

More Books for you:

A Long Bright Future, by Dr. Laura Carstensen

Life Gets Better, by Wendy Lustbader

What are Old People For? How Elders will Save the World, by Dr. Bill Thomas

Article and Video:

The Public View of Aging

Here is a brief article to supplement your reading in this chapter, and it includes a video of person-in-the-street perspectives on aging:

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/pubs/mtg/gaugingaging/page3.html>

Some TED Talks on This Topic:

Jane Fonda on "Life's Third Act"

https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_fonda_life_s_third_act

"Talks to Make You Feel Good About Getting Older"

https://www.ted.com/playlists/227/talks_to_make_you_feel_good_ab

Dr. Laura Carstensen on "Older People are Happier"

https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_carstensen_older_people_are_happier

- and another Video from Dr. Laura Carstensen, with good demographic info

http://video.pionline.com/media/Dr.+Laura+Carstensen+Keynote/0_aam6fjyy/0

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

The reading for this week is the introduction to "This Chair Rocks."

Please remember - this is a no judgment zone! We're here to support an honest conversation about the joys and challenges of growing old in an ageist society, so let's all just start where we're at.

P.S. this will also help you get the hang of sharing here!

Introduction/ice breaker:

Please tell us a bit about yourself, and tell us about an Elder who has had the greatest impact on your life. This could be someone from your personal life or from fiction or history, living or dead. What makes them special to you?

Discussion Prompts:

What really stands out for you in this introduction? Please share your thoughts and reactions in the comments section below. We're wide open to your input here, including (but not limited to) these discussion topics from this chapter:

- What does it mean to "age successfully?"
- Have you ever lied about your age? Why?
- Is there a "Ray" in your life? Someone your age with whom you compare yourself?
- Are you at peace with your age? Or do you wish you could make peace with it?
- What does it mean when Ashton Applewhite says that ageism is "socially constructed?"
- Think about your own assumptions about aging? Are they accurate? Where do they come from?

Chapter 1: The Problem with Ageism

Applewhite writes that "negative messages about aging cast a shadow across the entire life of every American, stunting our prospects, economy, and civic life. This is oppression: being controlled or treated unjustly."

How did we get here, and why do we keep doing this to ourselves? We'll take a look at this, as well as some of the myths used to advance the anti-Olders agenda in this first chapter.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know about the hidden costs of aging?

[“The Hidden Costs of Aging”](#) is a short video that takes a fascinating and fun approach to some of the costs and statistics of aging, including how many calories we consume, how many hours of commercials we watch, and the amount of money we spend on healthcare.

The video is accompanied by footage of people ranging in age from less than 1 year to 102 years.

The latter half of the video shows snapshots each person in ascending order of age (starting at the [1:30 mark](#)).

Here is the link: <http://www.insurancequotes.org/hidden-cost-aging/>

Did you know about this article on Universal Design?

From the National Association of Home Builders:
<https://www.nahb.org/en/consumers/homeownership/homeownership-articles/what-is-universal-design.aspx>

Did you know about these resources to prevent Elder Abuse?

National Center on Elder Abuse: <https://ncea.acl.gov/>

World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/

THESE ROCK, TOO!

I LOVE THIS Video:

How to Age Gracefully (Stay Weird!) https://youtu.be/sycgL3Qg_Ak

Listen in as people ranging in age from 7 - 92 share their hard-won wisdom!

What advice would you give your younger self?

Report:

Commitment to Person-Centered Language, by the Pioneer Network

This will challenge you to think about how we currently talk about Olders who accept care, and offer a shift in perspective that comes from the philosophy of *person-directed care*.

Available online at: <https://www.pioneernetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Commitment-to-Person-Centered-Language-Training.pdf>

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

This week's reading is Chapter One, "Where Ageism Comes From and What it Does."

What really stands out for you in this chapter?

Please share your thoughts and reactions in the comments section below. We're wide open to your input here, including (but not limited to) these discussion topics from this chapter:

- What are your thoughts about the term “gerontophobia?” How do you make sense of it? How might our society begin to address it?
- What is “internalized ageism” and what role does it play in our individual lives and in our economy?
- How do you react to the statement that “ageism is a prejudice against our own future selves.”? (p. 17)
- Do we “otherize” Olders? How?
- What role does ageism play in public health?

Chapter 2: Our Ages, Ourselves – Identity

What is age, really? If it's a number, when and why is it important? In this chapter we'll dig into how age is intertwined with identity, explore ideas and ideals about "aging successfully," and suggest a way to connect with your own future self.

DID YOU KNOW?

Identity is the first of seven “Domains of Wellbeing” identified by the Eden Alternative.

Find out more at <http://www.edenalt.org/about-the-eden-alternative/the-eden-alternative-domains-of-well-being/> and be sure to download their brief white paper on the topic, available at the bottom of the page.

Is there an **upcoming local event** of interest to your group? This is a great place to let folks know about it!

You can also invite your group members to bring in information, articles, and clippings that depict Ageism when they see it.

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Video:

Let's End Ageism, Ashton Applewhite's TED Talk (11minutes, 38 seconds)

https://www.ted.com/talks/ashton_applewhite_let_s_end_ageism?utm_campaign=tedsread--b&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Book:

Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging, by Dr. Lars Tornstam

Video:

AARP Millennials Show Us what “Old” Looks Like

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYdNjrUs4NM>

Video:

The Malignant Enlargement of Adulthood

Dr. Bill Thomas at the 7th International Eden Alternative Conference, Nashville, TN (2014) on the "malignant enlargement of adulthood," and the dignity and worth of EVERY human being, no matter their station, age, or ability.

<https://youtu.be/IUPxrh6EvJQ>



Video:

Aging Stereotypes Aren't a Punchline

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz6Sk3KjQbY>

Article:

"10 Things my Chronic Illness Taught My Children" from the New York Times, Aug. 16, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/opinion/chronic-rheumatoid-arthritis-children.html?mabReward=CTS2...>

Many thanks to one of our book study members for providing this link!!

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

This week's reading is Chapter 2: Our Ages, Ourselves - Identity.

What stands out for you in this chapter? What resonates with you or makes you uncomfortable here? Please share in the community forum, keeping in mind our guidelines and maintaining a respectful conversation with our grand and diverse community.

Here are some other conversation starters to consider:

- How do you feel about the way language reinforces the idea that feeling good = feeling “young” and feeling bad = feeling “old?”
- Decades of research confirms that personality remains surprisingly stable over the life course, barring any pathology/disease that may alter personality. Hence, her statement that “as the years pass we remain ourselves, just older.” What is your experience of this?
- There is now a lot of scholarly work supporting Dr. Becca Levy’s stereotype embodiment theory and the concept of stereotype threat (discussed on p. 44). Are you surprised at the extent of internalized ageism and the notion that Olders themselves can sometimes be the most ageist amongst us?
- Ashton Applewhite writes of the dangers of “inspiration porn” (p. 46) and Bill Thomas bemoans the use of the word “still” in referring to older adults who do things that push the limits. What are your thoughts on it? Is it inspiring or does it, as AA says, “distract from the social and economic factors that shrink the worlds of most older and disabled people?”
- In what ways have you experienced gerotranscendence?
- Has reading this chapter impacted the way you plan to respond when people ask how old you are? How?
- How did you react to the thought experiment she proposed on p. 57 about removing date of birth from medical records?
- How do you react to Tornstam’s assertion that “the mistake we make in middle age is thinking that good aging means continuing to be the way we were at fifty?”
- In what ways are you an “old person in training?”
- How will you engage in “radical aging” as described on p. 63?

NOTES:

Chapter 3: Forget Memory - the Older Brain

"A 2010 MetLife survey found that Americans fear only cancer more than Alzheimers..." In this chapter, we'll dig into the facts and myths about aging and cognitive changes. What actually happens to the brain as we get older? Did you know that many of our cognitive abilities actually improve??? Let's jump in!

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Olders living with cognitive challenges create amazing art?

Here is a brief video on "Opening Minds Through Art," an intergenerational program at Scripps Gerontology Institute: <https://youtu.be/VHevoIoB7h0>

Did you know that we get some awesome super powers as we age?

Dr. Bill Thomas spoke in Ithaca in January of 2015 about aging and cognition... Here is the video. It's a bit informal and runs just over 1 hour, but you can hear him well and you'll be glad to know about the gifts that aging bestows on our aging brains! <https://youtu.be/-m7jSVQEOGM>

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Video:

Dr. Al Power and Kate Swafer provide the BEST 6 minutes and 50 seconds on how to reframe how we think about "dementia" you will ever see!
<https://youtu.be/xiHzH5WpZmU>

Website and Book:

The Legacy Project: Life Lessons for Living from the Wisest Americans

The Legacy Project at Cornell University, under the direction of Dr. Karl Pillemer, has systematically collected practical advice from over 1500 older Americans who have lived through extraordinary experiences and historical events. They offer tips on surviving and thriving despite the challenges we all encounter.

Visit their website here: <http://legacyproject.human.cornell.edu/> and learn more about the book, too.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

Our reading for this week is Chapter Three: Forget Memory - The Older Brain.

Let's keep the conversation going! Below are some prompts, but please feel free to share any thoughts or feelings that are coming up for you in the readings, videos, or discussion.

You may be feeling inspired to bring up additional discussions (for example, "Creativity"); talk within your group about what is coming up for you as you read the book and check out the supplemental materials!

- What stands out for you about this chapter? Have you noticed your own cognitive abilities changing as you get older, and how do you think about those experiences?
- If you watched the video with Dr. Al Power and Kate Swafer, (See "These Rock, Too!"), what was your reaction to Dr. Power's ideas about dementia, or to Ms. Swafer's thoughts, as a person who lives with a dementia diagnosis?
- How have you seen people who live with dementia as "present... with ongoing human needs for affection, connection, and expression" (TCR, p. 69), and what can you share about your experience with them?
- What does it mean to you to "reassess what activities qualify as meaningful?" (p. 71). How can we know what is meaningful for another person, especially if they have difficulty communicating with us? (or we have difficulty understand what they are trying to communicate?)
- What does "wisdom" mean to you? Do you feel you've grown wiser as you've grown older, and if so, in what ways? Can you think of a very wise younger person and share that story?

NOTES:

Chapter 4: Health, Not Youth - the Older Body

“Attributing decline to age rather than illness perpetuates the negative stereotype of older people as frail and debilitated. Most are not... for most of us, health is a continuum.” This chapter explores the perceived relationship between health and age...

DID YOU KNOW?

The National Institute on Aging has health information available at:

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health>

Did you know that Sleep is *CRUCIAL* to our Health?

Here’s a good article from Harvard on "sleep hygiene." The only thing I would add is that a cooler room is generally better (it signals mammals that it’s time to sleep), although wearing sox can often, paradoxically, help with insomnia!

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/getting/overcoming/tips>

Did you know that Ageism has an impact on our Health Care?

Here’s an article from *NextAvenue*: "Ageism in Health Care, and How Dangerous it Can Be" <http://www.nextavenue.org/ageism-health-care-dangerous/>

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Websites:

Changing Aging

Changing Aging is a collection of blog posts that promote changing how we think about age and aging. A free subscription gives you access to writers and leaders in the culture change movement, and innovative, moving, and thought-provoking essays from a pro-aging perspective: <https://changingaging.org/>

How early emotional trauma could affect your health...

A large study by Kaiser-Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control is showing that early "adverse experiences" in a person's life correlate with a higher risk for health problems by mid-life.

Knowing about this risk could lead you and your health provider to explore treatment options, including newer counseling approaches that are geared toward helping your system recover from early trauma.

Here is more information on this important study:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health/adverse-childhood-experiences>

Article:

Diana Nyad on Aging: Why 66 is Better than 28

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-nyad-no-limits-aging-20151021-story.html>

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

This week's reading is Chapter 4: Health, Not Youth -- The Older Body.

Please share what stands out for you in this chapter, and/or respond to some of the discussion questions listed below.

- Gerontologists are fond of saying, “If you’ve seen one 80 year old, you’ve seen one 80 year old.” What does that mean to you?
- “A million compromises lie ahead. If they’re what it takes to get me out the door, I hope I’ll welcome them.” (p. 109) Have you thought about what compromises you will be willing/able to make if you get ill OR need to make age-related adjustments? What have you already compromised in life (perhaps some you don’t even think about, such as glasses or hearing aids?)
- “Not dealing with aging is a way of not dealing with living.” (p. 118). Have you had experience with this?
- If you hear, ‘what do you expect at your age?’, find a new doctor.” (p. 120). Has ageism had an impact on health care for you or someone you know? Without compromising anyone else's privacy, can you share what happened?
- “There’s no clear divide between mobility and immobility, or independence and helplessness. Binaries serve us badly.” How has this kind of “black and white” or binary

Chapter 5: No Expiration Date - Sex and Intimacy

Here we go! Let's explode the myths around sex as we grow older, and explore some of the ways people meet their need for intimacy. Be aware that this is adult subject matter and adult language is used. We'll also take a look at some ways our culture is starting to appreciate fashion, beauty and style for older women. About time!

Note to Book Study Facilitators: Soon after the Care Partner Connection/Ithaca College Online Study Group was scheduled to end, Ithaca College was hosting this event. We took the opportunity to let our study participants know about the screening during the week we talked about book's chapter on Sex and Intimacy. This is the kind of community event you might connect to for your group!

You're Invited to Attend a Film Screening!

Free and open to the public. Discussion to follow with filmmaker Steven Loring via Skype.

The Age of Love

Tuesday, November 14

6:30 pm

Textor 102

Ithaca College

“THE AGE OF LOVE follows the humorous and poignant adventures of thirty seniors in Rochester, NY who sign up for a first-of-its-kind speed dating event exclusively for 70- to 90-year-olds. From anxious anticipation through the dates that follow, it's an unexpected tale of intrepid seniors who lay their hearts on the line, and discover how dreams and desires change—or don't change—from first love to the far reaches of life.”

<http://theageoflovemovie.com/story/>

Presented by the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute.

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Websites:

The National Institute on Aging has information on Sexuality in Later Life at this webpage: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sexuality-later-life>

AARP Dating Information is available at <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/dating/>

Article:

"Men Over 50: Seven Ways to Improve Your Sex Life" from the Cleveland Clinic available online at <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/2017/09/7-simple-ways-to-improve-your-sex-life/>

Resource:

Planned Parenthood provides health and education on Menopause and Sexual Health Services for post-menopausal women, too!
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/menopause>

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

Our reading for this week is Chapter Five: No Expiration Date - Sex and Intimacy.

For our discussion, we'd love to hear your thoughts and comments on what stood out for you in the chapter, and we'd also like to invite you to upload an IMAGE or a POEM that represents "Intimacy" for you.

NOTES:

Chapter 6: Not Done Yet - the Workplace

Stereotypes about Olders in the workplace, the myth of the workplace war between the generations, and what about retirement, anyway? Is work worthwhile if you don't get paid for it? And what if you can't (or don't want to) work when you get older?

DID YOU KNOW?

Looking for Paid Work or to Volunteer?

Is there a Senior Community Services Employment Program for older workers in your community? How about resources to access Volunteer Opportunities?

If there are agencies or resources to help with employment or volunteering, you might share those connections, or ask for a volunteer to research them for the group.

*NOTE: you can find your local Office for Aging anywhere in the United States by calling the **Elder Services Locator at 1-800-677-1116** or visit them online at: <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>*

Disrupting the way we think about Older Workers

from "Next Avenue," June 2015:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2015/06/10/disrupting-the-way-we-think-about-older-workers/#324c37d46b0f>

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Each generation has its own way of looking at the world and workplace issues. Visit the web sites listed below to learn more about generational differences:

“A Generational Gap in Work Philosophy” Commentary by Baxter Black (3:22 run time) <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5072088>

“Generational Differences in the Workplace” Interview with CEO Fred Miller and President Corey Jamison from the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group (7:06 run time) <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5125730>

This is a *very* interesting **chart of generational differences**, including how the different generations generally view work and retirement but also covering a variety of other influences and influencers:

<http://www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf>

While we're at it, here are a couple of additional resources I found after our book study took place. Both of these NPR pieces examine the interesting relationship between health and retirement:

“Could Delaying Retirement Be Great for Your Health?” (1:48 run time)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/09/24/442923309/could-skipping-retirement-be-great-for-your-health>

“Thinking of Retiring? Consider Your Health” (5:26 run time)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/03/25/293727317/thinking-of-retiring-consider-your-health>

Enjoy!

Elizabeth B.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

Our reading for this week is Chapter 6: Not Done Yet - The Workplace.

- What are your thoughts about working and retirement?
- Has ageism in the workplace been an issue for you or for people you know? If so, could you describe what that experience was like?
- If you go to YouTube and look for "being vs doing," you get many different voices talking about this topic. In a culture that values "doing," can people who live with physical or cognitive challenges, or those who are very old and live with frailty, ever achieve the "status" of those who "can work?" If not, is there something about our culture that has to change, or are we okay with the way we think about physical and cognitive challenges, at any age?

NOTES:

Chapter 7: Long Life is a Team Sport - the Independence Trap

Ashton Applewhite writes that "just as age is better viewed as a spectrum than as an old/young binary, so, too, with self-reliance. Seeing it as a dichotomy (dependence/independence, giver/receiver, passive/active) reduces myriad human exchanges to one-way transactions, when in fact they are complex and nuanced and involve mutual risk and gain."

In this chapter we explore the idea that we are all, in fact, INTERdependent, and the ways this bipolar view contributes to ageism and ableism.

DID YOU KNOW?

"20 Facts about Senior Isolation," an article from the website, *A Place for Mom*: <http://www.aplaceformom.com/blog/10-17-14-facts-about-senior-isolation/>

Many communities have a **Senior Center** that offers activities, a nutritious meal, and opportunities to meet other people. **What is available in your community?** Contact your local Office for Aging to find out more!

The Village to Village Network is a not-for profit organization that supports the movement to connect Elders who want to stay in their homes through mutual support.

Complete information is available at:
http://www.vtvnetwork.org/content.aspx?page_id=0&club_id=691012

THESE ROCK, TOO!

"Creating Home" is a brief video that provides an overview of The Eden Alternative approach to changing how we view aging and Elder care by ending Loneliness, Helplessness, and Boredom for Elders and their Care Partners.

See the video at: <https://youtu.be/qK3vTbckZMw>
More on The Eden Alternative™ at: www.edenalt.org

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

Hi, Groups! I just had to include this video, which came to my attention via Facebook while we were running our original book study in Ithaca, NY.

A woman who writes a cooking blog responds to hate mail criticizing her grey hairs... Her story is very powerful: <https://youtu.be/aFk9L3nhS0Q>

I hope your group is going well. Drop us a line sometime and say “hi!” (contact info at the back of this guide).

Thanks and take care,

Lisa K.

Our reading this week is Chapter 7: The Independence Trap - Long Life is a Team Sport.

Ageism reinforces the western ideal of the rugged individualist, but the truth is that we are all interdependent. (Just think of what happens in a bad ice storm, when the power goes out for more than a few days!)

What do you think of the ideas presented in this chapter?

Here are some discussion prompts, just to get us started...

- In what ways is dependence equated with shame in our culture and how might we go about changing that?
- How could our society change/be changed to encourage more interdependence?
- In what ways do you see the cultural value on independence in your own life?
- What changes could you make to live more interdependently?
- Rate your own social-planning skills and how they've affected you across your lifetime.
- What was one of the main take home messages of this reading for you?

Chapter 8: The Bull Looks Different - the End of Life

Ashton Applewhite quotes geriatrician Marc Agronin, "We project our terror of death onto the aged... And yet in my fifteen years of working in nursing homes, I have never heard a patient tell me that he or she was afraid of death."

In this chapter we explore death and dying, the view of death from Elderhood, and the complicated issues surrounding the right to die. You'll find information about the importance of having advanced directives and talking about your preferences for care at the end of life, too.

Onward!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Letter Project from Stanford University?

Stanford University is building a "What Matters Most" Letter Bank.

This will be a national repository of What-Matters-Most Letters. The goal is to collect 100,000 letters representative of a diverse population and make it available to anyone who wants to be guided by the population's wisdom as they write their own What-Matters-Most Letters. More information on this project can be found at: <https://youtu.be/vApg3qAn55s>

Being Mortal

The PBS special Being Mortal, featuring Atul Gawande, can be watched here, along with many other resources and clips:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/being-mortal/>

End of Life Conversations

How to Talk End of Life with a Dying Patient:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45b2QZxDd_o

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Videos:

From StoryCorps: Danny Perasa and his wife, Annie

"Danny Perasa and his wife, Annie, came to StoryCorps to recount their twenty-seven-year romance. As they remember their life together from their first date to Danny's final days with terminal cancer, these remarkable Brooklyn-ites personify the eloquence, grace, and poetry that can be found in the voices of everyday people when we take the time to listen."

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/WNfvuJr9164>

What Really Matters at the End of Life?

"At the end of our lives, what do we most wish for? For many, it's simply comfort, respect, love. **BJ Miller** is a hospice and palliative medicine physician who thinks deeply about how to create a dignified, graceful end of life for his patients. Take the time to savor this moving talk, which asks big questions about how we think on death and honor life."

See the video of Dr. Miller's TED Talk at:

https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life

Websites/Resources:

Aging with Dignity

Aging with Dignity is "a private, non-profit organization with a mission to safeguard the human dignity of people as they age or face serious illness. For nearly 20 years, Aging with Dignity has been an advocate for quality care for those near the end of life."

Aging with Dignity is the home of **Five Wishes**, a popular document that can be used in many states to document your advance health care and end of life wishes. Visit them at <https://www.agingwithdignity.org/>

Not Dead Yet website: <http://notdeadyet.org/>

Compassion & Choices website: <https://www.compassionandchoices.org/>

Websites/Resources, (Continued):

Jessica Zitter, M.D.

Critical and Palliative Care Specialist, Author of “Extreme Measures,” and “Accidental” Activist. Her website includes an “Explore Free Resources and Tools” tab that is especially useful! <https://jessiczitter.com/>

The Conscious Dying Institute (CDI)

The Conscious Dying Institute is "a transformational learning organization that places healing practices in the hands of the people who matter most: *Caring Professionals and Families.*"

They certify End of Life Doulas. Find out more at:
<http://www.consciousdyinginstitute.com/>

Conversation Project website: <http://theconversationproject.org/>

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

This week's reading is Chapter Eight: The Bull Looks Different - The End of Life.

Please share your thoughts about the chapter, or any of the supplemental resources we've posted for this week in the "Did You Know" or "These Rock, Too" sections.

Below you'll find some discussion prompts!

As always, thank you for your participation. We are so glad to have you as part of this community.

- Have your ideas about death changed over time? If so, what has influenced those changes?
- In what ways have you seen the “bull look different?”
- The author writes (p. 212) "Repelled by physical decline, anchored in our own point in the life course, focused on loss, we tend to grossly underestimate the quality of life of the very old, especially if they're severely disabled and/or live in an 'old age home.' We miss the beauties and intimacies of those last chapters, their pleasures local and all the more keenly experienced." Can you share a story about receiving "gifts" from the very old or severely disabled?

- What is your reaction to Schopenhauer’s notion that “mid-life is that point in time of life when you begin to think backwards from death instead of forward from birth?”
- What is your reaction to Laura Carstensen’s finding that “...the awareness that time is short doesn’t fill people with dread. It makes people spend their time more wisely?” And what about the companion notion that “...a long future can be oppressive?”
- What are your reflections on the way death happens in our modern healthcare system vs. the way death used to happen?
- Are there circumstances under which people should have the legal right to “physician-assisted suicide” or “aid in dying?” How might ageism and ableism complicate this issue?
- What is most important to you about your own future end-of-life experience?
- Have you talked with your loved ones about these priorities? Is there anything you’d like to share about this experience?
- What gets in the way of having conversations about your wishes for health care, and appointing an agent (or proxy) to speak for you if you can’t speak for yourself? What might make those conversations easier?
- How can our society help bring death “out of the closet?”
- Does your family or your culture have specific rituals for death and dying? Do these continue to hold meaning or would you like to create new rituals, ceremonies, or customs that would bind generations together and nurture communities??

NOTES:

Chapter 9: Occupy Age! Beyond Ageism

How do we confront the ageism that is ubiquitous in ourselves and our culture, confront it when we see it, and ultimately trigger what Ashton Applewhite calls "a mass shift in consciousness?" This chapter offers concrete ideas to move the movement forward...

DID YOU KNOW?

Organizations supporting a new view of Aging:

Ashton Applewhite's homepage has resources, including a free booklet, "Who Me, Ageist? How to Start Your Own Consciousness-Raising Group"
<https://thischairrocks.com/>

Pioneer Network <https://www.pioneernetwork.net/>

The Eden Alternative <http://www.edenalt.org/>

Leading Age <http://www.leadingage.org/>

World Health Organization on Age Friendly Communities <http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

THESE ROCK, TOO!

Websites:

"For the Next 7 Generations: The Grandmothers Speak."

See the trailer for a film about the **International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers**, and learn more about the work of these Wise Olders at: <http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/>

The Elders

The Elders are "Independent global leaders working together for peace and human rights," founded by leaders such as President Jimmy Carter, Chief Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Kofi Annan. Find out more about their work at: <https://theelders.org/>

Dr. Bill Thomas official website: <https://drbillthomas.org/>

Founder of The Eden Alternative and The Green House Movement, Dr. Thomas asks, "What if nearly everything we think we know about aging is wrong?" on his *Changing Aging Tour*.

Article:

The Croning of America: How Post50 Women Are Learning to Love Their Inner Crone

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-hannah-grufferman/what-every-post50-woman-s_b_1864921.html

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & PUSHBACK

Our reading for this week is the final chapter in Ashton Applewhite's book, Chapter 9: Occupy Age! Beyond Ageism.

Your book study may be ending here, or, like us, you may have a final event featuring a live appearance with author Ashton Applewhite, or a big party to decide where you'll go next!

If so, be sure to announce details for the event, and in either case, please capture feedback about the study and feel free to share your data with Lisa Kendall at lisa@lisakendallcounseling.com so we can continue to improve this study guide.

In the meantime, let's dive in together. Please keep the conversation going by sharing your thoughts, feelings, experiences, questions, and stories related to this chapter, as well as to reflect on what the entire study has meant for each participant (see the suggestions for a final learning circle at http://actionpact.com/resources/the_learning_circle)

- How do you respond to the author's statement that "...it's ageism, far more than the passage of time, that makes growing older harder for all of us?" (p. 232)
- Active participation in this group has likely caused you to examine and acknowledge your own prejudices regarding age and to work toward making your own behavior and beliefs less ageist – the first two steps in a three step process Ashton Applewhite outlines on pages 233-234. What about the next step – “pointing out ageist behavior or attitudes in other people?” Have you had a chance to try this third step out yet? If so, please share a little about it. How did it go? If not, how do you imagine doing it in the future? What are your fears or reservations about doing so, if any? What advice would you give to someone about this third step?
- In what ways have you or your loved ones engaged in global thinking, rationalizing, minimizing, or blaming (described on pages 241-242)?

- Ashton Applewhite offers several suggestions for crafting a new “social compact for longer lives” (p. 244-246). What are your thoughts about the items of this list, collectively or individually?

Closing Learning Circle Question

(Please refer to the ActionPact materials at http://actionpact.com/resources/the_learning_circle and remind participants about guidelines for using the Learning Circle. Start with a Volunteer... thence around the circle. Remind folks to keep responses brief, and remember, no cross talk! Participants may pass, but come back to them to see if they want to add their comments. End with sincere thanks for participation.)

**What is one thing you learned from the book study
that changed your mind about aging,
and one thing that changed your heart?**

NOTE: In the 2017 Ithaca virtual book study, we had 116 online enrollees, and four spin-off groups that chose to meet live, (two of those had the support of Karen Brown, from the Finger Lakes Geriatric Education Center, who provided group facilitation). One of the groups decided to continue to meet as a “consciousness raising group” after the study ended.

Thank you so very much for creating your own group to study Ashton Applewhite's book, "This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism."

I hope you've enjoyed it as much as we did here in Ithaca.

Please don't hesitate to drop us a line with your feedback, including triumphs (may they be many), horror stories (let's hope they are few-to-none), and suggestions for improvement.

Take Care,

Lisa K. & Elizabeth B.

*Lisa A. Kendall LCSW-R, CSW-G
lisa@lisakendallcounseling.com*

About the Study Guide Authors:

The online study group for Ashton Applewhite's "This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism" was a joint effort between Care Partner Connection and the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, and culminated in Ms. Applewhite's appearance as Distinguished Speaker for Ithaca College on October 23, 2017.

What an exciting way to get ready for a live event with a truly important voice in the movement to change how we think about aging in America!

More about the hosts, and authors of this guide:

LISA A. KENDALL, LCSW-R, CSW-G

Lisa teaches the Fieldwork in Gerontology course for Ithaca College and operates *Care Partner Connection* as the educational arm of her private counseling and consulting practice.



As a social worker who has had the great honor of working with Elders and their care partners for more than 30 years, Lisa believes that Elderhood offers many gifts as well as opportunities for growth and healing.

In her private psychotherapy practice, Lisa works with individuals and families challenged by issues related to aging and Elder care, health concerns, and bereavement and loss. She has a special interest in supporting healing for survivors of emotional trauma.

An Educator and Mentor for The Eden Alternative™, Lisa is an enthusiastic advocate for person-directed, trauma-informed approaches to care and to co-creating well-being for the whole care partner team, whether in the home, the community, or in organizations committed to learning and growing.

Find out more at www.LisaKendallCounseling.com

Lisa Kendall
counseling & consulting 



FEATURING SPECIAL GUEST, ELIZABETH BERGMAN, Ph.D.

Elizabeth has been on the faculty in the Gerontology Institute at Ithaca College since 2008 and in August 2017 became its Academic Chair.

Dr. Bergman teaches Aging Studies courses and conducts research focusing primarily on palliative care and services and supports for people with advanced illness and their loved ones. In addition, she serves as co-director of the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute's Center for Palliative Care.

Since its release, Elizabeth has been using *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism* in her introductory level course, *Age Matters: Discovering the Possibilities beyond Midlife*.

Elizabeth earned her Ph.D. in Aging Studies from the University of South Florida. She has served in a variety of capacities within the aging network - from leading activities and volunteers in an assisted living facility, to counseling Older and their loved ones about community services and supports with an Area Agency on Aging, to leading federally-funded programs (Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program) with a community non-profit. This work inspired Elizabeth to incorporate an experiential learning component of some kind into every course she teaches. Some great examples of the ICGI and community partnerships and more about Elizabeth and her work at the Gerontology Institute can be viewed at <https://faculty.ithaca.edu/ebergman/>



Ithaca College established the Gerontology Institute in 1992 to serve as a campus and community resource that promotes and supports research, curriculum development, community education, and community service

activities in gerontology. The Institute offers a major and a minor in aging studies for undergraduates. As part of our mission to serve as a community resource, the Institute offers training for professionals in health and aging services through a number of internally funded and grant funded initiatives.

For more information, please visit the Gerontology Institute website at <http://www.ithaca.edu/gerontology/>

AND A BIT ABOUT ASHTON, FROM HER WEBSITE:

I didn't set out to become a writer. I went into publishing because I loved to read and didn't have any better ideas. I had a weakness for the kind of jokes that make you cringe and guffaw at the same time, my boss kept telling me to write them down, and the collection turned into the best-selling paperback of 1982. I was a clue on "Jeopardy" ("Who is the author of *Truly Tasteless Jokes?*" Answer: "Blanche Knott."), and as Blanche made publishing history by occupying four of the fifteen spots on the *New York Times* bestseller list.



My first serious book, *Cutting Loose: Why Women Who End Their Marriages Do So Well*, was published by HarperCollins in 1997. *Ms.* magazine called it "rocket fuel for launching new lives," and it landed me on Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum enemies list. It also got me invited to join the board of the nascent Council on

Contemporary Families, a group of distinguished family scholars. I belonged to the Artist's Network of Refuse & Resist group that originated the anti-Iraq-invasion slogan and performance pieces titled "Our Grief is Not a Cry for War." As a contributing editor of *IEEE Spectrum* magazine, I went to Laos to cover a village getting internet access via a bicycle-powered computer. Since 2000 I've been on staff at the American Museum of Natural History, where I write about everything under the Sun.

The catalyst for *Cutting Loose* was puzzlement: why was our notion of women's lives after divorce (visualize depressed dame on barstool) so different from the happy and energized reality? A similar question gave rise to [This Chair Rocks](#): why is our view of late life so unrelievedly grim when the lived reality is so different? I began blogging about aging and ageism in 2007 and started speaking on the subject in July, 2012, which is also when I started the [Yo, Is This Ageist?](#) blog. During that time I've been recognized by the *New York Times*, National Public Radio, and the American Society on Aging as an expert on ageism and named as a Fellow by the Knight Foundation, the *New York Times*, Yale Law School, and the Royal Society for the Arts; I've written for *Harper's*, *Playboy*, and the *New York Times*, and I speak widely, at venues that have ranged from universities and community centers to the Library of Congress and the United Nations.

My book, [This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism](#), was published in March, 2016. Later that year, I joined the PBS site Next Avenue's annual list of [50 Influencers in Aging](#) as their Influencer of the Year. In 2017 I received a standing ovation for my talk at [TED 2017](#), their mainstage event in Vancouver, and joined the fifth annual Forbes list of [Forty Women to Watch over 40](#).

Contact Information

Ashton Applewhite's website:

<https://thischairrocks.com/>

Lisa Kendall's website:

<https://lisakendallcounseling.com/>

Care Partner Connection Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/145528155934501/>

Lisa Kendall Counseling on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/lisakendallcounseling>

The Ithaca College Gerontology Institute website:

<https://www.ithaca.edu/gerontology/>

The Ithaca College Gerontology Institute Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/IC.Gerontology.Institute/>

Finger Lakes Geriatric Education Center website:

<https://www.ithaca.edu/gerontology/flgec/>

Supplemental Materials

OUR FINAL ONLINE MODULE

The following appeared on our book study online platform for participants a few days before Ashton Applewhite was to arrive in Ithaca to address a live audience:

(Page 1) Our Grand Finale!

It's time to meet Ashton Applewhite!

We hope you've enjoyed the book study and can join us for Ms. Applewhite's talk at Ithaca College on Monday, October 23rd.

Even if you can't, we want to thank you, and ask that you take a moment to give us some feedback about how our first online book study went for you! (A link to an online evaluation form was sent by Ithaca College after the study ended)

(Page 2) Introducing Ashton Applewhite, Live and In-Person!

Please join us to hear Ithaca College Distinguished Speaker

Ashton Applewhite
Author and Activist

This Chair Rocks: How Ageism Warps Our View of Long Life

Monday, October 23, 2017

7:00 p.m.

Emerson Suites, Phillips Hall
Ithaca College

FREE and Open to the Public

for more on the IC Distinguished Speaker Series:
<https://www.ithaca.edu/gerontology/speakerseries/>

BELOW: Download and share a flyer for this FREE event.

Before we say Good-Bye... (email sent out to participants)

Hi, Everyone,

It's been such a learning experience to share in this book study with all of you, both the online community and everyone who is participating in live groups around Ithaca, NY. We want to sincerely thank you for going along on this journey, for sharing your thoughts and feedback, and for making the whole thing work!

This was a new experiment for Care Partner Connection, the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, and the Finger Lakes Geriatric Education Center.

We'll be sending an email with a link to a brief online survey, and if you could take a moment to complete it, your feedback will help us serve you better with future programming.

Of course, the icing on the cake would be if we could say hello in person at the Distinguished Speaker event on Monday, October 23rd at Ithaca College, when the author of "This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism" will be speaking!

Look for more information about "what's coming next" and about the Distinguished Speaker Event on the other activity pages in this week's "lesson."

Thank you again for your participation, it's been an honor.

Take care,

Lisa Kendall, Elizabeth Bergman, and Karen Brown