

Elderhood

5 Fallacies to dispense with immediately

By Di Percy

In this article, we get a glimpse of the transition to Elderhood and the outdated fallacies surrounding elders. We can all use what we say as well as what we do to paint a new, relevant reality of what it means to be an Elder today.

Words have power

What is said has the ability to shift the way we see reality.

How often do we hear derogatory names for Elders like “silly old fool”, “the old bat who’s lost it” and “total dinosaur”? ... and worse.

Having lunch in a city Melbourne restaurant, I overheard those very words from three young businessmen, only to see their two companions arrive – to my surprise, fit, healthy, attractive people in their mid to late 50s.



You could say they are just throwaway lines, but the bottom line is either we take a stand on how we’re defined as Elders, or sit back while others do it for us. Words have power, like it or not.

We’re up against a society that idolises youthfulness and over the last 50 years has lost respect for Elders and an intrinsic place for them. The term “Baby Boomers” infantilizes or demotes the elder life stage we enter over 52 years (yes, a mere 52 years young). I prefer the term “Elders”. It denotes some strength of character and perception.

A New Generation of Elders

This generation of Elders is wealthier, healthier and more resourceful, educated, aware and goal-oriented than any previous generation in our history. We have opinions about the world. We know who we are and where we fit.

What we’re not as good at is how to *be* Elders and what it means. We need to work out how to make Elderhood a time of immense value with it’s own distinctions and purpose in contrast to the more youthful, warrior-like Adulthood.

The lack of direction is compounded by the crazy fallacies that exist about Elders. Here are five fallacies to get rid of straight away and replace with a new reality and attitude.

5 Fallacies About Elders and the New Realities

Fallacy 1: *Being an Elder and the decline into old age are synonymous.*

New Reality: **Elderhood is the third life stage when we have the opportunity to become whole** and fully mature, to reach our pinnacle as an active contributor. Old age comes much later as part of the preparation for dying.

Fallacy 2. *Elders don't have much to offer.*

New Reality: **At their best, Elders are visionaries.** Their maturity and wholeness means their egos are tamed and don't cloud or distort the vision.

Fallacy 3. *Skills in Elderhood mimic Adulthood.*

New Reality: **The class of skill, wisdom and benefits that elders contribute is unique to their life stage.** This needs to be better understood and respected by Elders themselves as well as everyone else.



Fallacy 4. *Wisdom comes automatically with age.*

New Reality: **The personal integration required to be a top quality Elder doesn't happen automatically** and requires developing new skill, awareness and inner-leadership.

Fallacy 5. *Only entrepreneurial Elders will accomplish.*

New Reality: **All Elders need to take the lead in their life**, rise to new challenges and find what brings fulfillment. The scale and form it takes is a matter of choice and being aware of our unique gift.

Because words have power, the demeaning fallacies about Elderhood must be weeded out and exposed for what they are: a thing of the past. A dinosaur. More importantly, as Elders we need to take the lead and be liberated with new reality frameworks. 'Change the frame and we change the game.'