**Stereotypes: Older Workers**

**Deal with the Negatives**:

You may have to convince employers that you don’t fit the negative stereotypes, but before you convince anyone else - you need to believe it yourself!

Negative Beliefs:

* Not productive
* Not able to learn new skills
* Inflexible, unwilling to change or try new ways
* Can’t take criticism or instruction
* Likely to quit soon
* Not interested in learning new skills

**Dispelling the Negative Stereotypes:**

Studies related toproductivity and older workers showed that there is no connection between age and job performance. More difference was found within an age group rather than between age groups. So basically, if you were a productive younger worker you would be more likely to be a productive older worker.

Ability to learn and the desire to gain more knowledge also do not decrease with age. Again, it is more a result of the individuals desire to learn.

**Managing the Negative Stereotypes:**

Check your beliefs, the negative beliefs you have can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you feel tired and less energetic than you were 20 years ago, it will show in how you carry yourself. Employers observe our actions and our words in interviews or meetings. “*Actions speak louder than words*.” How are you presenting yourself?

Do you believe you are too old to try new things and start a new career? If you believe that this is true, it will come across in an interview. How do we mange some of these negative issues:

* Don’t reveal your age or information that will age you.
* For example, in an interview don’t mention how old you are or if you are receiving a pension. Also don’t make “jokes” about your age, being old, etc.
* Leave out earlier employment and dates of training certificates that are not applicable.
* Make it obvious that you don’t fit the negative stereotype.
* Upgrade your skills, computers, social networking tools.
* Make sure your resume is professional and in an up-to-date format.
* Stay healthy and fit. First impressions are important, so be sure to look energetic and confident.
* Look “up-to-date” in your appearance, grooming, the way you hold yourself.
* Address potential concerns indirectly, without being asked.
* Make it clear you have the skills for the job, give examples.
* Give examples of working under a younger supervisor or working as part of a team.
* If the job is physically demanding, give examples of things you have done recently that are equally demanding.
* Have a career plan and give the employer an example of how the job fits into that plan. (Dispel the concern of you not staying long).
* Talk about some training you have recently taken.
* Find out in advance, if you can be what the employer is looking for in an employee and be prepared to present how you fit the bill.

**Final Notes:**

Keep in mind, one bad experience with an interview does not mean that all employers are biased against older workers. Assuming the worst can make you look and sound defensive*.*

*Convincing others may require persistence:*

*John Glenn’s experience in a good example. The astronaut and United States Senator wanted to be involved in medical and scientific experiments planned for a 1998 NASA Discovery Mission. He had been out of the space program for years and was over 70 years of age. But he believed he was the right person for the job. People at NASA were not easily convinced. Mr. Glenn had to talk to NASA dozens of times, before he finally got the go-ahead for the mission.*

“Age is a state of mind: If **you** don’t mind, it doesn’t matter” – Mark Twain

Note: These materials have been developed and adapted from a range of sources for the purpose of the Bruce County Job Search Club.