

# Does age matter?

By Dorina Diakou

I hate the letter 'a' that's in the word 'Age' because of the 16869 words that start with the letter 'a', only this one makes me wrestle in my mind. Age follows me everywhere! I cannot get through a day without being reminded that because of my age, only just from that three-letter word, I am only allowed to do certain things.

Everything revolves around our age; when we are fourteen, we start realising that the world we live in can actually be a dystopia and we begin to want to change the world in our idealist way of thinking. Or when we are twenty, we start realising that we have to take things seriously and into our own hands, so we start working hard in order to have a better life. Our age is like a videogame - it has stages depending on our age, however, this small three letter word in 2023 does not have the meaning it used to have twenty years ago.

Are we really living in a society where we acknowledge people for who they really are and what they have to offer rather than how old they are? It is dismal to expose what is referred to as the 'invisible' or discreet discrimination in our society which is that of discriminating others because of their age – this type of discrimination that is so universally part of our everyday life and culture that we often support it ignorantly.

Due to communication between the prefrontal cortex (working memory) and hippocampus (long-term memory), we can make decisions, which is one of the most complicated and hard processes of a human since this process draws our lives forward. It has been debated how old one must be to start making important individual decisions for one's life but also when it is age-appropriate to become involved in decision-making events for the community. A common view and policy is that we should officially be adults, which is over 18. Others oppose this arguing that children should be given the opportunity in decision-making and age does not really matter; the importance for them to be involved outweighs the risks.

Children are the future of our planet; they are basically the humans who are going to be living in this world in 50-60 years from now so I believe that age should not be the factor that divides who is going to make decisions or not since we must not leave our future in others' hands. Supporting the involvement of any age starting from around the age of fifteen, where an individual is fully capable of understanding and making decisions, can bring many benefits to society. First of all, it empowers and builds our confidence since we acknowledge limits and boundaries within our personal control. At fifteen, children show a well-founded level of competence in metacognitive understanding of decision-making and our involvement in the youth parliament has proved that young brains can have fresh and clearer perspectives than adults when an issue is being debated or considered. Finally, our involvement

can bring up issues that bother our generation and we can also assist in finding ways to solve these grievances and make crucial decisions for our future. This does not only refer to us youngsters but also to the older generations whose contribution to decision-making can help since they are wiser and have more experience. As Helen Keller once said: "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."

Moreover, age diversity in the workforce can lead to hundreds of advantages not only at work but in our whole society. This can come from the improvement of employee turnover rates, meaning more experienced and committed employees are in the business, or innovation as the workforce has so many different minds at work which means different perspectives on different issues and a variety of approaches, leading to a company which fosters creative and forward-thinking ideas. Having different people with different ages work together, for example, a 20-year-old with a 50-year-old experienced worker that has been working in an industry all his working life can help immensely with the younger generation as each one individually can help each other grow. It can be said that younger people or the other way, older people do not get the same opportunities in relation to the opposing age. This issue that divides generations should be fixed immediately because, as I mentioned, working in an environment that provides opportunities for both younger and older people can bring many employment benefits. Now for the final question: would your business use the method of age diversity which employs people whatever age they are? Well, if you want your company to achieve higher success from employing an experienced workforce to launch your company to the next level, like I would, the answer will be a YES!

One cannot deny that the age gap in a relationship has also been a controversial issue over time. It is questionable whether a huge age gap is good or not, but is age a significant enough reason for one to put a hold on their feelings? Love disrupts all boundaries, and it should not be overshadowed by minor details like an age gap. A relationship should be based on trust, trust is like the glue to a healthy relationship and both sides should be committed to it. Maturity is a crucial key in a relationship which leads to the journey of a future in a relationship; it depends, for example, if a 20-year-old wants to be in a relationship with a 40-year-old; the question is if these people are mature enough to commit. If they are, then it can work. Both spouses may have different perspectives on life since they may be from different generations, which can lead to helping each other in understanding and accepting newer ideas.

No matter how far I would run, age is right behind me, because our society keeps looking at it. But I finally realise that this does not matter anymore. Now I am looking forward instead of behind me and our society should too. I have learned that age does not matter and how we conduct ourselves makes us who we are – it is not that three-letter word which identifies what we can and cannot

do. I know that in the past twenty years how the world approaches and identifies people's age has changed positively. Some examples may be from working in an age-diverse environment, a generational gap in a relationship or being involved in committees or organisations where younger people are included in decision-making. Our world is like a rock: it is strong and it is powerful, we have so many minds and souls to work with, but it is in our hands to make that change, therefore, energy, passion, wisdom and knowledge are far more important than age – it is our ethos which will determine what we can and what we cannot do as regards to our capabilities – not our age!