**Ageism**

is when someone is treated badly because of their age. We know that sometimes in our society teenagers and senior citizens are not listened to or given as much respect as others. (We know that is a generalization and that in some communities elders are valued for their experience and youth as the future.)

* For example, have you ever walked into a convenience store and been treated like you are going to shoplift just because you are young? This is ageism! It’s basically the belief that youth and senior citizens can’t contribute to society or make good decisions just because of their age. We know that this is totally untrue because anybody at any age can have good ideas and make good decisions especially if they have the right information!

**Racism**

is when someone is treated badly because of the colour of their skin or where they come from. We know that not all skin colours are treated equally in our society. Racism can be seen as bigger than just one person, and is a whole system that is trying to put a group of people down (this is known as **systemic racism**.) Itcan be explained as a collective failure by a society as a whole to provide a safe and just environment to certain groups of people, based on their skin colour, culture, or ethnic background.

* Newcomers have a lot of challenges to overcome when moving into a completely different country. Experiencing harassment from other people, including police, shouldn’t have to be part of the burden but sadly can be.
* If someone is born with white skin in Canada, they can often have an easier time dealing with police than someone who is a different colour. Since that person didn’t do any work to get that power, they can be said to have [privilege](http://teentalk.ca/issues/appreciating-diversity/power-and-privilege).

**Sexism**

is when someone is treated badly because of their sex, gender, or perceived [gender](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights). Equal rights between men and women still do not exist. Although we’ve come a long way, there is still a long way to go. Therefore, when we talk about sexism, we almost always see this type of discrimination happen towards women. Also known as genderism.

All girls and women everywhere **should**have the freedom to:

* live free from [sexual assault](http://teentalk.ca/issues/teen-dating-violence/types-of-abuse);
* access [birth control](http://teentalk.ca/issues/birth-control) (including [ECP](http://teentalk.ca/issues/birth-control/emergency-contraceptive-pill-ecp));
* have control over their bodies at all times(including during [pregnancy](http://teentalk.ca/issues/pregnancy-options)and [sex](http://teentalk.ca/issues/sex));
* choose [abortion](http://teentalk.ca/issues/pregnancy-options/abortion), [adoption](http://teentalk.ca/issues/pregnancy-options/adoption), and [parenting](http://teentalk.ca/issues/pregnancy-options/parenting)without pressure or bias from others;
* be paid equally for equal work;
* be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

**Homophobia**

is when someone is treated badly because of their [sexual orientation](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights). Sadly, in our society if someone identifies as [gay](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights), [lesbian](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights), [bisexual](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights), [transgender](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights), or [two-spirit](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality/youth-rights), they can face harassment. This behaviour usually comes out of the belief that being gay is wrong, or that if someone really wanted to, they could change and not be gay anymore.  This is simply not true! Can you imagine if someone who was straight was expected to all of a sudden completely change who they were attracted to and be gay? It doesn’t seem too likely does it?  And there is nothing wrong with being gay anyways! People have the right to be attracted to whoever they want, and live as whatever gender they want, free of harassment.

Our society often doesn’t think about the power of words, and how bad they can make someone feel.

* For example, we often hear people saying the phrase, “that’s so gay,” to describe something negative. If someone was gay and constantly heard that being gay was not good they can start to feel pretty badly about themselves. It’s the same as someone saying, “that’s retarded,” to describe something negative. Again, if someone was dealing with a [cognitive disability](http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/cognitive/) , they can start to feel pretty badly.

The point is that all of us need to work to make things as safe and welcoming for everyone, so people can openly be who they are without dealing with harassment and feeling bad about themselves.

**Ableism**

is when someone is treated badly because of a disability that they live with.

* For example, let’s say you were in a wheelchair and you really wanted to go see a new movie. All of your friends were going, but then you found out that you couldn’t go because the theatre didn’t have wheelchair access. That would be  unfair and is ableism.

We know that there is sometimes a belief that if someone is living with a disability, that they will never be interested in dating or having sex. However, we know that every person in this world has a [sexuality](http://teentalk.ca/issues/youth-sexuality), and has every right to express it.

**Classism**

is when someone is treated badly because of their social standing or how much money they have. We know that in our society a lot of times people get caught up in valuing how much money they have, what clothes they wear, and what kind of car they drive. Is this actually what makes them a great person? It can sometimes feel that way, but this is not true. It’s how you treat the people that are around you as well as how true you stay to yourself that makes you cool.

For those of us that have money, things can be easier along the way. We may not face challenges that others might face. This doesn’t make us bad people, and doesn’t mean we should feel guilty, but it is important to be aware of our privilige. For those of us that don’t have much money, we can sometimes have a tougher time along the way. It doesn’t mean that we won’t succeed, it just means that we might have more of a struggle to get there. The good news is that by facing and overcoming struggles, we build strength that other folks might never have and that that strength will help us with whatever we choose to do in our lives.

The important thing to remember about the different types of discrimination is that they are all unfair and hurtful. Sometimes in our society one type of discrimination seems more acceptable than another type. Yet they are all hurtful, so it makes sense that if you are against one type of discrimination, then you should be against them all!