



What is Elder Abuse?

There are many different kinds of elder abuse. Elder abuse can be in the form of: financial exploitation, neglect, isolation, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or domestic abuse. Sometimes, many different forms of abuse happen at the same time.

This section will talk about the different forms of abuse and share some stories from people who have experienced abusive situations.

Financial exploitation

You might be worried that someone is taking over your bank accounts or controlling your money. Or, you might feel like someone is trying to take advantage of you. Or, someone might be telling you that you can't do things because they have "Power of Attorney over you." If any of these things are true for you, someone might be financially exploiting you. Financial exploitation is a form of elder abuse that happens when someone takes your money, property, or assets without your permission.

Here is an example of financial exploitation:

Joe made his daughter the agent under his Power of Attorney thinking he might need help with paying his bills in the future. Then he started getting past due bills from credit card companies, but he did not own a credit card. He found out she had cleaned out his bank account and taken out several credit cards in his name. Joe went to Legal Services for Maine Elders for help in cleaning up his debt problems and revoking the Power of Attorney.

Neglect

If you are not getting the help, care, or food that you need, there's a good chance that you are being neglected. This is especially true if someone said that they would do these things for you. Neglect is a very common form of elder abuse.

Here is an example of neglect:

Mary lived with her husband Frank for 31 years. She did not drive and her husband handled all of the bill paying. After Frank died, she needed help with many things around the house. Her niece Sarah agreed to move in and help out. Sarah helped with cleaning, cooking, and bill paying for several weeks, but then she stopped buying any groceries. And then the power was shut off because she wasn't paying the bills. Mary was not sure what was happening with her money. Sarah threatened to send Mary to a home if she tried to get help from anyone else. Legal Services for Maine Elders helped Mary get her niece out of the house, and the local Area Agency on Aging helped her find a trusted caregiver to help her stay in her home.

Isolation

Maybe you are feeling lonely but someone is keeping you from getting in touch with your friends or family. Or maybe you are forced to stay in a room and are not allowed to come out without permission. If someone is keeping you from connecting with other people, this is called isolation.

Here is an example of isolation:

Louise lived alone and was losing her sight. She was having a hard time taking care of herself and her home. Louise's daughter and son in law convinced her to sell her home and buy a trailer in the daughter's name. They said they would put the trailer on their property. They promised Louise that she could live there forever and they would take care of her. All they asked in return was that she put their names on all her bank accounts. After she did all these things, they took away her phone and refused to put any calls through to her. Instead, they told her no one cared about her any more. They also took the keys to her car. The trailer had no heat and the weather was getting colder. Louise told a friend at her church what was going on and the friend called the police and adult protective services. With the help of her APS worker, Louise was able to make the changes she needed to regain control of her life and get into a safe living situation.

Physical abuse

If someone hurts you physically or uses drugs to control you, you might be experiencing physical abuse. Physical abuse is a form of elder abuse that happens when someone hits, kicks or slaps you. It is also physical abuse if someone restrains you by force or with medication.

Here is an example of physical abuse:

Frank's son Bill was living with him because he could not find work. It helped them both to share living expenses. But Bill had a serious drinking problem and he sometimes yelled at his father when he was drunk. The yelling was happening more and more often. Finally Frank told Bill he would have to leave if he didn't stop yelling at him. This made Bill very angry and he pushed his father down. Frank called Legal Services for Maine Elders and an attorney helped him get a protective order and remove his son from his house.

Sexual abuse

You might have had an interaction with someone that left you feeling bad. That person might have forced you to touch them, or may have touched you without your permission. Maybe that person didn't touch you, but forced you to take off your clothes. Or maybe they took off their clothes in front of you or forced you to look at dirty pictures or videos. All of these things are forms of sexual abuse.

Here is an example of sexual abuse:

Sue was befriended by a man from her apartment complex. He helped her carry groceries from her car and chatted with her when she was walking her dog. One day he showed up at her apartment and asked if he could come in for a visit. Once inside, he pulled down his pants and asked Sue if she wanted to be his boyfriend. He left when she said no, but Sue was very frightened and felt trapped in her apartment. She called Legal Services for Maine Elders and obtained a protection order and got help making a report to the police. She also got connected to her local Sexual Violence Support Center where she was able to talk to someone and get the emotional support she needed.

Emotional abuse

Is there someone in your life who says things that hurt you? Does this person make you feel embarrassed or ashamed? Do they tell you that you are confused or can't remember things because you are old? Or, maybe someone scares you because of how they act. Maybe they even threaten you with harm if you don't do what they want. This is called emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse rarely occurs alone. It is often paired with other forms of abuse.

Domestic abuse

If any of these forms of abuse are happening to you by your spouse, significant other, child, grandchild, or any other member of your family, it is called domestic abuse.

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