

Safety Planning

Whether someone chooses to stay or leave, it is important to make a safety plan. The following are some things that may make the situation safer.

Plan Ahead

- ◆ Practice how to exit the home safely.
- ◆ Identify a neighbor to tell about the violence and ask him/her to call the police if he/she hears disturbances.
 - ◆ Devise a code word to use with children/grandchildren, family and friends when you need help.
- ◆ Decide where to go if you leave home.
- ◆ Have a packed bag ready and keep it at a relative's or friend's home in case you need to leave quickly.
- ◆ Open a savings account and post office box in your own name.

What to Take if You Leave

- ◆ Identification: driver's license, birth certificate, Social Security card, SS award letter and/or proof of disability.
- ◆ Financial: money, credit cards, bank books and checkbook.
- ◆ Legal Papers: copy of protection order, lease/rental agreement, car registration and insurance card, insurance papers and medical records, Medicare card.
- ◆ Other: keys, medications, hearing aids, glasses, phone card, bus pass.

**If you or someone
you know needs
help you can
CALL . . .**

**Nebraska's coalition of
domestic violence and
sexual assault programs
provide access to safety
and shelter across the
state. To locate the program
nearest you, visit
www.nebraskacoalition.org**

Or Call:

**Nebraska Vulnerable Adult Abuse
& Child Abuse Reporting Hotline:
1-800-652-1999**

**Outside of Nebraska:
National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

**National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)**

**National Elder Abuse Hotline:
1-800-677-1116**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ABUSE IN LATER LIFE



***No One Deserves to
Be Abused!***

This brochure was created using materials from the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life.

What Is Abuse in Later Life?

Abuse in later life occurs when an older person is subjected to a pattern of coercive behaviors used to gain and maintain power and control. Typically, the victim is 50 years or older. Most victims are women, but can be men.

Victims have ongoing, trusting relationships with abusers, such as spouse/life partner, adult children, other family members and some caregivers. The abuse usually occurs in the person's home. The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse has identified three main types of domestic violence in later life.

New Relationship

A new marriage or life partnership that begins in later life, sometimes following the death or divorce of a previous partner, where one partner is abusive.

Late Onset

An older person who has *not* been abusive in the past becomes abusive. The abuse may be triggered by retirement, the changing role of family members, sexual changes and disabilities or other physical or mental health problems.

DV Grown Old

Relationships where violence and/or abuse occurred throughout the relationship without being noticed. Sadly, this is the most common form of abuse in later life.

Abuse in Later Life Wheel



Facts & Figures

Domestic violence knows no age limits. Consider these statistics.

- Every year, an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of physical, psychological, and other forms of abuse and neglect.¹
- Older women are more likely to experience domestic violence for a longer time, to be in current violent relationships, and to have health and mental health problems.²
- Elder abuse is underreported; it is estimated that only 1 in 5 cases are reported.³

1. *Elder Abuse and Neglect: In Search of Solutions*, American Psychological Association, 2005.

2. *The Nature and Impact of Domestic Violence Across Age Cohorts*, Wilke D. and Vinton, L., 2005.

3. *Assessing for Abuse in Later Life*, National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, 2004.

Tactics Used by Abusers

Emotional Abuse

- Threatens to leave, divorce or institutionalize the victim.
- Ignores or ridicules religious and/or cultural traditions of the victim.
- Humiliates or demeans the victim.
- Isolates the victim from friends and other family members.

Financial Exploitation

- Steals money, titles or possessions of the victim.
- Coerces victim into signing legal documents or paying for things the victim doesn't need.
- Promises life-long care in exchange for deeding property or money.
- Signs checks using the victim's name.

Physical Abuse

- Slaps, hits, punches, burns, strangles the victim and throws things.
- Is rough with intimate body parts during care giving.
- Refuses to change dirty linen and/or clothing.
- Takes walker, wheelchair, glasses, or other assistive items from victim.
- Denies or refuses access to health care or other basic physical needs like food, water, medication, etc.
- Improperly uses physical restraints.

What Can I Do? . . .
Listen. Offer Hope and
Support

Victims of abuse can benefit simply from being heard, believed and supported. Talk to the victim. Tell him or her you are concerned for his/her safety and that you are there to help. Let them know that domestic violence and elder abuse rarely stop without some sort of outside intervention. Offer to accompany them to speak with an advocate at a domestic violence/sexual assault program.

Focus on Safety

Always consider whether or not the victim will be safer as a result of any action you take. Some ideas, such as talking to the abuser, may unintentionally increase risk to the victim or yourself.

Respect the Victim's
Decision

Whether the victim chooses to stay with an abuser, leave an abuser immediately, or leave an abuser over time, respect the decision without judging. It can be hard to support a person who stays or leaves and returns to an abuser multiple times, but remember that elder victims of abuse are faced with difficult choices and few options. Many victims who end relationships with abusers have left several times before the final break.

Recognize Your Own
Limitations

You are not responsible for "fixing" the problem. You can offer options, support, and connections to community resources.

Frequently Asked Ques-

How can I tell a fight from abuse?

Disagreements occur in relationships. Sometimes people say things that hurt each other's feelings. In most relationships, however, adults apologize and move forward. No one gets physically hurt. When there is abuse, one person uses power and control to get what he/she wants out of the relationship, and the threat of harm is present.

Why do victims stay?

Older victims of abuse often love the people who harm them. Keeping the family together may be very important to the victim. Other victims fear they will be seriously hurt if they leave, and some victims do not have the financial resources needed to leave. Medical conditions and disabilities may make living on their own difficult or impossible for some victims.

Where to get information?

The local domestic violence/sexual assault program can provide more information. You can also visit these websites.

- National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life: www.ncall.us
- National Center on Elder Abuse: www.elderabusecenter.org
- Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services - Adult Protective Services: www.dhhs.ne.gov
- Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition: www.nebraskacoalition.org