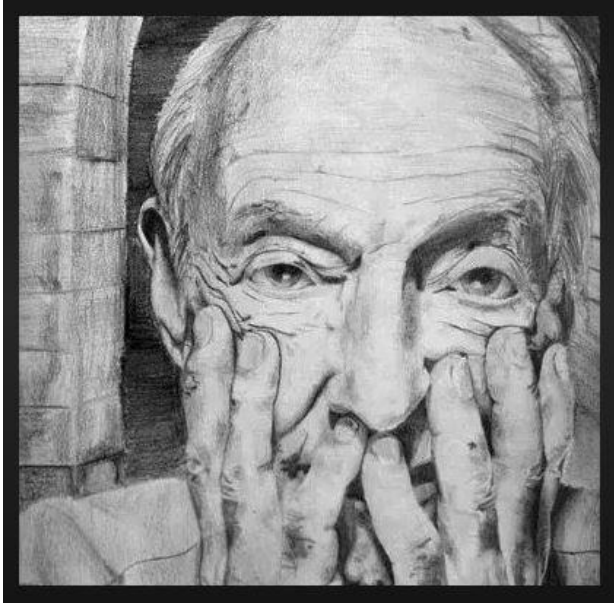


Elder Abuse



The Elderly population is also vulnerable to abuse in a number of ways. Depending on others for partial or complete care and/or having diminished and confused mental status can lead seniors wide open to the possibility of being abused. Being frail also increases the odds of being abused. In certain situations the elderly may be aware they are being abused but are too prideful, are being abused by family members, or are too embarrassed to report the abuse to other family members, trusted caregivers, or the authorities.

Elder Abuse includes many different types of mistreatment. These can include: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Financial, Neglect, Abandonment and Self-Neglect Possible warning signs of possible Elder Abuse may include (but are not limited to):

- Bruises on the body from slaps, applied pressure, and/or punches; burns and blisters that are suspicious in origin and are recurring in nature; and broken bones. (Physical Abuse)
- Personality changes without an underlying medical cause; withdrawal; change in level of alertness; constantly feeling frightened; inability or refusal to carry out their usual activities in daily living; losing interest in extra-curricular activities; depression. (Emotional Abuse , Neglect)
- Bruising and/or injury around breasts, genitals and anus. (Sexual Abuse)
- Changes in financial accounts; suddenly altered wills and trust documents; change in banks, lawyers, and/or accountants; multiple checks written as "gifts" or "loans" or to contractors with no visible or incomplete work done; missing or "lost" possessions; new credit cards, bank loans, mortgages; loss of property; and increase in bills with nothing to show for the increase. (Financial Abuse)
- Bedsores; increase in needed medical care; poor grooming; lengthened hair and nails; visible weight loss. (Neglect, Self-Neglect)
- Senior missing, then found far afield of home. (Abandonment)

- Further signs of Self-Neglect can be lack of food stores, refusing to eat and take prescribed medications, hoarding (this includes trash and animals), unsafe living conditions, vermin infested home, mismanaged finances, unpaid bills, utilities turned off, keeping isolated, disorientation, alcohol and/or drug/medication dependence.

(Note: Some of the above signs can also be due to medical reasons and/or altered mental or psychological status not associated with abuse but should raise a flag of caution to be investigated.)

Elder Abuse and Neglect in many ways are similar to child abuse and the abuse exerted upon a partner. For all ages, imposed isolation and being made to feel powerless is also a tactic used by the abuser. Although abuse of the elderly can be perpetrated by caregiving professionals, con-artists, "new friends", clergy, lawyers and accountants the majority of elder abuse is carried out by family members, including the spouse. Family members are also the least reported incidents and least pursued legally. Abuse can also be caused by older adults suffering from mental impairment. This is usually discovered when the partner needs hospital admission due to a severe injury.

As with all kinds of abuse, if possible, the elder victim should be made to understand they are not responsible for their abuse. Every effort should be made to support the abused on a physical, mental, emotional, and legal level.

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, Bureau of Justice Statistics as of July, 2014 there is a yearly average of over two million reported cases of elder abuse with 9.5% of the elderly population experiencing abuse. (This is just the reported cases!) Of these reported cases 66% are committed by adult children or spouses.

Breakdown of all reported cases (the elderly being defined as anyone 60 or older):

- Neglect- 58.5%
- Physical Abuse- 15.7%
- Financial Exploitation- 12.3%
- Emotional Abuse- 7.3%
- Sexual Abuse- 0.04%
- All other types- 5.1%
- Other – 0.06%

As always, trust your instincts and speak up if you are suspicious of possible abuse (remember, this can happen to anyone). In cases of immediate danger, call the police. In all other cases you can report your concerns to the police, or your local Adult Protective Services program. In cases occurring in a long term care facility or a professional agency you can report to offices of Medicare, Medicaid, or to a Long-Term Care Ombudsman/Patient Advocate. You can also get in touch with the Eldercare Locator by telephone 1-800-677-1116 where trained operators will refer you to a local agency that can help in the situation, or access their website: www.eldercare.gov

You do not have to prove the abuse. It is the professionals' job to investigate the report of suspected abuse.

With Gratitude,

Kai