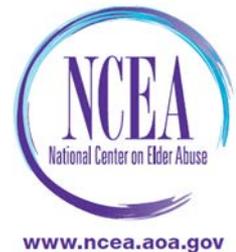


An Introduction to Elder Abuse for Professionals:

Psychological Abuse



Understanding Psychological Abuse

Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Define and describe psychological abuse
- Identify indicators of psychological abuse
- Identify strategies to respond to possible psychological abuse situations

Case Example

- Anthony told his elderly mother that he would kidnap and torture her beloved cat unless she let him live in her basement apartment.

Case Example (Cont.)

- Staff at an Adult Day Health Center overheard Jane telling her elderly father, as she dropped him off, that he was “slow”, “stupid” and “smelly”.
- Jane was also verbally abusive to the Center staff.

Case Example(Cont.)

- Eddie (age 75) and Marta's home (age 76) were friends from bridge club.
- Marta received several letters from Eddie in which he said that he dreamed about her, wanted to make love to her, and could not live without her.
- Eddie left telephone messages on her answering machine stating he wanted to see her and that he loved her. Marta saw his car outside her house and outside her church though he did not attend services there.
- Marta lost sleep, was unable to eat, added locks to her doors and windows, and was afraid to leave her home.

Psychological Abuse

The infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts

(National Center on Elder Abuse)

Psychological Abuse (Cont..)

- The systematic perpetration of malicious and explicit non-physical acts against a victim
- Often a pattern of tactics calculated to:
 - Undermine the victim's confidence and self-reliance
 - Create fear

Psychological Abuse (Cont.)

- Often co-occurs with other forms and is used to facilitate commission of other forms (Conrad, 2011; Anetzberger, 1998)
- Takes several forms (Conrad et al, 2011)
 - Isolation
 - Threats and intimidation
 - Insensitivity and disrespect
 - Shaming and blaming

Abuser Tactics

Isolation

- Giving the “silent treatment”
- Denying the victim access to money or economic support
- Isolating the victim from family, friends, previously enjoyed activities, and information
- Withdrawing affection
- Lying or making misleading comments with intent to cause emotional pain
- Preventing the victim from eating, sleeping, or leaving their residence

Abuser Tactics- (Cont.)

Threats and Intimidation

- Harassing the victim
- Damaging the victim's property
- Threatening or physically abusing the family pet
- Threatening nursing home placement
- Threatening to injure, permanently disfigure, or kill the victim and/or loved ones.

Abuser Tactics(Cont.)

Insensitivity and Disrespect

- Verbally insulting or humiliating
- Treating an older adult like a servant
- Intentionally disrespecting or disregarding the cultural or religious values/needs of the adult

Abuser Tactics (Cont.)

Shaming and Blaming

- Treating an older adult like a child
- Willfully undermining an older person's abilities to make decisions, control their own life, and remain independent for personal benefit
- Blaming the older person for accidents
- Falsely claiming that an older person is demented

Non-Criminal and Criminal Behaviors

Non-Criminal Behaviors

- Insults
- Put downs
- Name calling
- Silent treatment
- “Mind games”

Criminal Behaviors

- Stalking
- Criminal threats
- Vandalism or destruction of property
- Pet abuse



Consider adding state, tribal, or territorial statutes relating to psychological abuse here. These may be found in criminal law, protective services, or other, statutes.

Consider discussing reporting laws in the Response Section (slide 23).

Indicators: Potential Victim

- Social isolation, withdrawal
- Fearful
- Defers in the presence of the suspected abuser
- Crying, shaking, trembling
- May question own capabilities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Suicidal thoughts and/or suicide attempts

Impact on Potential Victim

- Psychological abuse may result in deterioration of physical and mental health.
 - Depression
 - Disturbed eating and sleeping
 - Declining functional abilities
 - Inability to make decisions when no underlying physical or medical explanation
- Poor work or volunteer performance
- Non-compliance with medical treatment

Response to Psychological Abuse

Victim Safety

All responses and interventions must consider and prioritize victim safety.

What You Can Do

- **Recognize the signs of Psychological Abuse**
- **Ask**
- **Report or refer**

If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking:

- When is the last time you visited with friends and family?
- Are you afraid? Worried?
- Is anyone hurting you or frightening you?
- Is anyone telling you to do things which make you uncomfortable?

*Ask privately in an area where you will not be overheard

If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking:

- Is anyone threatening or intimidating you?
- Have personal items been damaged or destroyed or disappeared?
- Are you concerned for the welfare of your pet?

*Ask privately in an area where you will not be overheard

Report - Refer

REPORT

- 911 or law enforcement (life threatening or possible crime)
- Adult protective services
- Licensing board (if abuse occurs in a facility)

REFER

- Domestic violence or sexual assault organization
- Aging network agency
- Ombudsman (if abuse is in a facility)



Consider inserting slides
describing the local jurisdiction's
elder abuse/
vulnerable adult reporting law



Consider adding local resources and programs. (See “*A Guide to Planning Your Elder Abuse Presentation*” at ***** for more information.)

Additional Resources

- [National Center on Elder Abuse \(NCEA\)](#)
- [National Adult Protective Services Resource Center \(NAPSRC\)](#)
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE**
- [National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life \(NCALL\)](#)
- [Stalking Resource Center](#)
- [The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care](#)
- [National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center](#)

For more information, visit us!

ncea.aoa.gov

Also on Facebook, Twitter,
YouTube

centeronelderabuse.org

Also on Facebook, YouTube



For additional resources, visit www.ncea.aoa.gov



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