

Elder Abuse Awareness: Caregivers and People with Dementia

By: Nancy Bozak, Administrative Assistant

People with dementia are vulnerable to abuse by people who are close to them, either in residential or home settings. They are also vulnerable to being taken advantage of by strangers because of their cognitive impairment. Abuse situations are often preventable through adequate support, training, supervision and legal protection.

People with dementia are at increased risk of different forms of abuse such as, financial, physical, psychological, verbal and neglect, due to their cognitive impairment, loss of capacity, communication challenges and increasing dependence on their caregivers.

The person with dementia may also abuse the caregiver either due to lifelong habits or impact from the disease.

Risk factors for abuse by caregivers include;

- Lack of knowledge about dementia.
- High level of stress and inability to cope with it.
- Having no alternative strategies to address challenges that come with the disease.
- Depression
- Lack of appropriate counseling and support.
- The caregiver's perception that taking care of the elder is burdensome and without psychological reward.

Risk factors for abuse by the person with dementia include;

- Intensity of a person's illness or stage of dementia.
- Change in mood and behavior associated with dementia.
- The person's own tendency toward verbal or physical aggression.

Risk factors that can affect both the caregiver and person with dementia include;

- The stress of care, mental and physical health problems that can affect the coping abilities of both the caregiver and the person with dementia.
- Substance abuse
- Social isolation
- The person's history of being abusive or having experienced abuse.
- A history of domestic violence in the home.

Greater understanding of the disease and what to expect can be helpful. Making sure that caregivers have respite care breaks is also important. If, as a caregiver, you are having difficulty coping with stress related to caregiving, it is important to get the support you need,

Peterborough/Northumberland Office:

183 Simcoe ST, K9H 2H6 :
705-748-5131 or 800-561-2588,
Fax: 705-748-6174

Lindsay/Haliburton Office

55 Mary ST W, Suite 201, K9V 5Z6
705-878-0126 or 800-765-0515,
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Alzheimer Society

PETERBOROUGH, KAWARTHA LAKES, NORTHUMBERLAND & HALIBURTON

through a counselor, or someone through the local Alzheimer Society.

Senior's Safety Line 1-866-299-1011

Peterborough Alzheimer Society 1-800-561-2588

Kawartha Lakes Alzheimer Society 1-800-765-0515

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