

Emotional abuse of older persons

Emotional abuse includes any verbal or non-verbal acts that diminish the identity, dignity or self-worth of another person.

Examples of emotional abuse

- insults and put-downs;
- lies and breaking promises;
- name-calling, swearing, yelling, scolding;
- ignoring or the “silent treatment”;
- humiliation and intimidation;
- withdrawal of love or affection;
- threats of violence, abandonment or being sent away;
- treating an older person like a child; and
- threatening suicide to get one’s way.

What are some of the impacts of emotional abuse?

- social isolation;
- depression, fear and anxiety;
- health problems and a weakened immune system;
- low self-esteem;
- withdrawal or passivity; and
- feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Abuse can happen to anyone

- Abuse can happen to an older person regardless of his or her activity level, physical or mental ability, income, gender, culture, health, or level of education.
- Abuse can happen to older persons who live alone, with family, or in a care facility.

Who are the abusers?

- Most often the abuser is someone the older person knows such as a family member (adult child, spouse, grandchild), friend, neighbour, care provider, or landlord. However, an abuser can also be a stranger.
- An abuser might be someone the older person depends on to provide care, and is often a person in a position of trust.

**Emotional abuse
breaks the spirit.**

Tips to share with older persons: prevention of emotional abuse

- Confide in a trusted person who can help you to explore your options and plan for your safety.
- Stay active in the community and connected with trusted family and friends.
- When emotionally abusive behaviours are crimes, such as threats to physically harm you, you can call the RCMP or the Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit for assistance.
- Develop a buddy system with a friend outside the home and plan for regular contact.
- Take care of your health and seek professional help for any drug, alcohol or mental health concerns.
- You have rights! Never be afraid to ask for help.



Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity

You are not alone — help and support are available

Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit: phone 456-3946; toll-free 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3946