

## Dealing With Aging and Loss

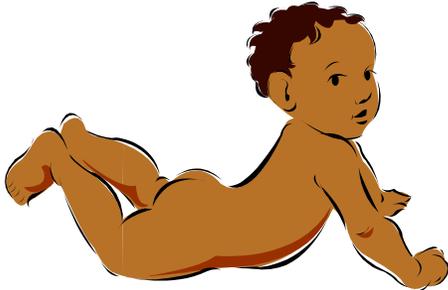


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Dealing with aging should seem natural; however many lack understanding about the aging process which sometimes leads to elderly abuse in caregiving concerns and fiduciary relationships.

An Aging awareness and education publication

**Aging is a natural process nothing or no one can avoid it.....  
It is part of the naturally organic biome systems set in time**



**Phases and Stages of Aging**



**- Different genders but the same cycle**



# The effects of aging are different for everyone

Even though there are some commonalities. People come from different environment into common places and bring their cultures with them.

Culture and environment is a way of life which includes the beliefs, customs, values, language, inventions, arts, institutions and technology.

Culture is acquired through learning based on the use of symbols and consists of individual and group traits called patterns.

- Language – how they speak the language they speak.
- Food – how they prepare their food.
- Clothing – how they dress.
- Homes – what kind of dwellings they live in.
- Work – what kind of work they do.
- Ethics- how people govern themselves

# Role of Culture



Culture influences how abuse is manifested, perceived, and responded to. It dictates victims' willingness to accept help and determines who they will turn to in times of need.

There are several important characteristics of culture and the main ones are:

- (1) A culture satisfies human needs in particular ways.
- (2) A culture is acquired through learning.
- (3) A culture is based on the use of symbols.
- (4) A culture consists of individual traits and groups of traits called patterns.

To have a greater impact on prevention of elderly adult abuse we must have research to explore the issues of cultural norms and cultural expectations in relation to the perception, determinants, and differences in racial and ethnic communities to improve the coping and quality of life that comes with aging.

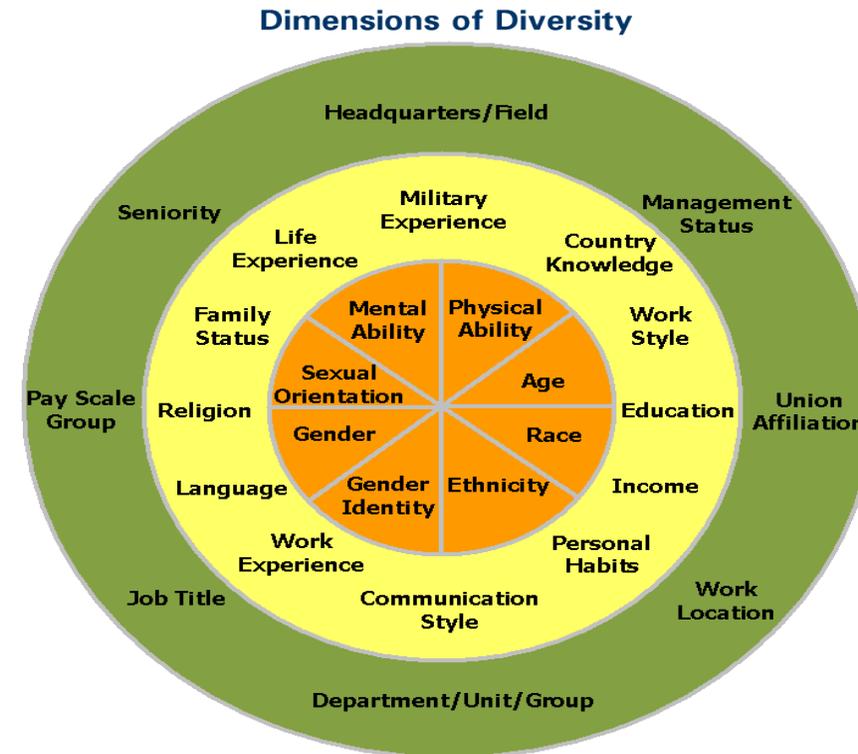
# Diverse Cultures

No society is so isolated that it does not come in contact with other societies. When contact occurs, societies borrow cultural traits from one another. As a result, cultural traits and patterns tend to spread from the society in which they originated.

- The United States is the common place where millions of people speak both English and the language of their own culture. They eat both American and ethnic food; celebrate both American national holidays, as well as their own ethnic holidays; wear both American and their own ethnic clothing.

## Culture exists within all environments.

- Government
- Communities
- Neighborhoods
- Work and Marketplace
- Schools and Public Places



# Victim Gender

The vast majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults have lived through discrimination, social stigma, and the effects of prejudice both past and present, including a history of being labeled as criminals, sinners, and mentally ill. For some, this fear and social stigma has disrupted their lives, their connections with their families of origin, their lifetime earnings and their opportunities to save for retirement. It has also made many of them apprehensive of health care professionals and aging service providers.

Aging service providers should be aware that the effects of a lifetime of stigma, discrimination, rejection and ridicule puts LGBT older adults at greater risk for physical and mental illnesses, and other issues including:

- • Social Isolation
- • Depression and Anxiety
- • Poverty
- • Chronic Illnesses
- • Delayed Care-Seeking
- • Poor Nutrition
- • Premature Mortality

Females, males, and those who don't identify with a specific gender identity may be victims of abuse in later life. The majority of older victims of intimate partner violence and sexual abuse in later life are women (Acierno, 2013; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013).

# Victim Age

- When defining elder abuse, most states, tribes, and organizations use a minimum age threshold that ranges from 50 to 70. The term abuse in later life applies to victims who are age 50 and older for the following reasons



- By age 50 there is a significant decrease in the number of victims accessing services from domestic violence and sexual assault programs. This is partly because many services for domestic and sexual assault victims focus on meeting the needs of younger women and their children. Most domestic and sexual violence programs do not have programming tailored to meet the unique needs of victims of abuse in later life, such as financial planning for persons who do not yet qualify for Social Security or support groups exclusively for older women.
- Victims who are age 50 and older may need economic assistance to obtain safe housing and live independently if they choose to leave their abuser. However, victims who are age 50 to 62 may be ineligible for financial assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program because they may not be parenting children under the age of 18.
- They also may be ineligible for Social Security and aging network services because they are too young. Few options exist to assist victims in this age group who want to become independent from their abuser but do not have the financial resources to do so.

# Mental Capacity



- Mental capacity is affected by many factors. As people age, they may experience some natural decline in certain mental functions, particularly memory. Pronounced decline, however, signals illness or disease. A variety of factors, some of which are treatable, may contribute to mental decline. These include poor nutrition, depression, and interactions between medications. Time of day may also be a factor as some people are more alert at certain times of day than at others.

## What is Mental Capacity?

- Mental capacity is the term used to describe the cluster of mental skills that people use in their everyday lives. It includes memory, logic, the ability to calculate, and the "flexibility" to turn one's attention from one task to another. Mental status assessment is a complex process involving a variety of measurements carried out by trained professionals. Simple tests, such as the mini mental status exam, are commonly used in a variety of settings to provide workers with a general impression of the scope and extent of a person's deficits



# Undue Influence

Undue influence is when an individual who is stronger or more powerful gets a weaker individual to do something that the weaker person would not have done otherwise. The stronger person uses various techniques or manipulations over time to gain power and compliance. They may isolate the weaker person, promote dependency, or induce fear and distrust of others

Who commits undue influence? The psychological definition of undue influence implies that the influencer is someone the older adult knows and with whom the older adult already has a relationship of trust or who intentionally develops and then takes advantage of a relationship of trust with the older adult. The term “relationship of trust” is commonly used to describe the relationship an older adult has with intimate partners, relatives, paid or unpaid caregivers, friends, neighbors, clergy, and fiduciaries such as agents under a power of attorney, trustees, guardians, or conservators. The nature of the relationship between the alleged influencer and the alleged victim is, generally, crucial to assessing and proving whether undue influence has occurred.

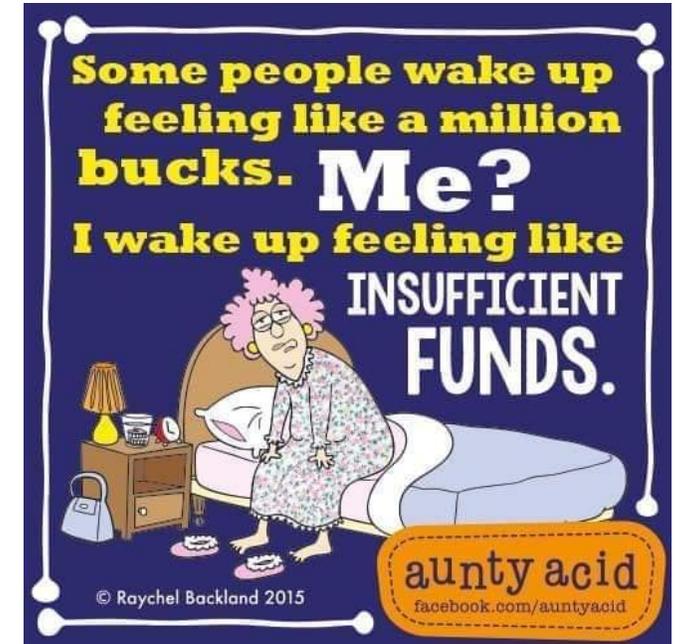
Source: <https://ncler.acl.gov/>



# Financial Exploitation

“Exploitation” means an action that involves the misuse of an adult’s funds, property, or personal dignity by another person.

- Many aging adults have had to relocate or experienced exploitation with the loss of their homes..



# Relationship Issues

Relationship Status:  
**it's complicated**



Elder abuse victims often live in silent desperation, unwilling to seek assistance because they believe their cries for help will go unanswered and they fear retaliation from their abusers.

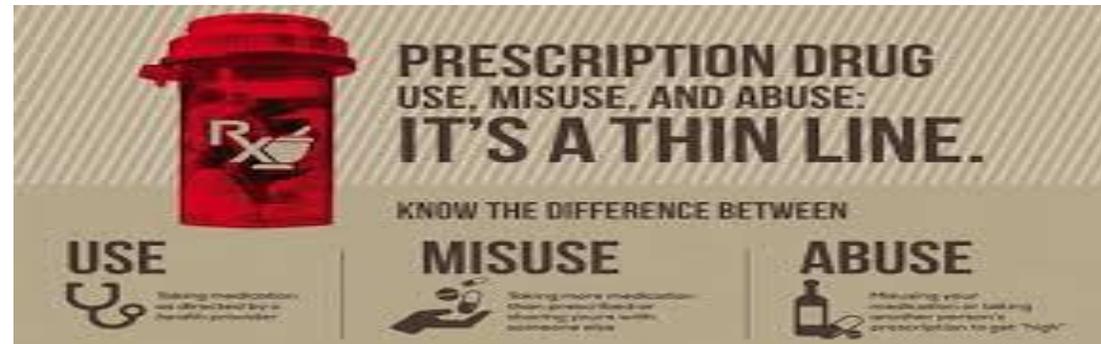
Many remain silent to protect abusive family members from legal consequences of their crimes, or are too embarrassed to admit that they have fallen victim to predators. Other fears that no one will believe them and chalk up their allegations to the effects of being old and aging.

Factors such as socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, educational background and geographic location do not prevent abuse to the elderly from occurring. Nor do they provide an impregnable barrier against its broad and horrific reach.

# Substance Abuse and Aging

Complications that occur with increasing frequency with age, such as medical comorbidity, cognitive impairment, and frailty, contribute to the potential adverse interactions between substance misuse and an aging brain.

- Elderly alcohol abusers can be divided into two general types: the "hardy survivors," those who have been abusing alcohol for many years and have reached 65, and the "late onset" group, those who begin abusing alcohol later in life.
- The latter group's alcohol abuse is often triggered by changes in life such as: retirement, death or separation from a family member, a friend or a pet, health concerns, reduced income, impairment of sleep and/or familial conflict. Because alcohol has a higher absorption rate in the elderly, much like it does in women, the same amount of alcohol produces higher blood alcohol levels, causing a greater degree of intoxication than the same amount of alcohol would cause in younger male drinkers.



- The elderly spend over \$500 million yearly on medications. Combining medications and alcohol frequently result in significant adverse reactions. Due to a reduction in blood flow to the liver and kidneys in the elderly, there can be a 50% decrease in the rate of metabolism of some medications, especially benzodiazepines.

# Domestic Abuse and Aging

Some older people enter into abusive relationships late in life. "Domestic violence grown old" is when domestic violence started earlier in life and persists into old age. "Late onset domestic violence" begins in old age.



Abuse is a learned behavior and has an escalating cycle that cuts across all racial, ethnic, educational and socioeconomic boundaries.

There may have been a strained relationship or emotional abuse earlier that got worse as the partners aged. When abuse begins or is exacerbated in old age, it is likely to be linked to:

- Retirement
- Disability
- Changing roles of family members
- Sexual changes

The abuse may take the form of verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical battering or psychological (emotional) unavailability and use to gain power and control.

# Several categories of domestic violence against the elderly have been identified below:

Domestic violence and sexual abuse in later life are subsets of elder abuse

## Who is at risk?

Older women whose relationships with their spouses or intimate partners were abusive or strained when they were younger.

Older women who enter into intimate relationships late in life.

## What are the Indicators?

Indicators of domestic violence are similar to those associated with physical abuse and/or sexual abuse. The following additional patterns are also characteristic:

- The frequency and severity of injuries are likely to increase over time.
- Victims often experience intense confusion and disassociation.
- Violent incidents are often preceded by periods of intensifying tension and followed by periods of apparent contrition on the part of perpetrators.

## What is the Safety Plan?

- A safety plan helps to provide ideas and identify options for the victim's safety and means of escape. Each plan should be written down, individualized, reviewed regularly and stored in a safe place and a copy given to a trusted friend or family member or physician.

A safety plan may include the following:

- Safe places to go, such as the home of a friend, family member, shelter or hospital.
- Strategies for reducing harm if the victim is going to continue to have contact with the abuser.
- A checklist of essential items to keep together in a safe place.
- A list of contact (telephone) numbers of family, friends, community organizations, and emergency service providers.
- If the person lives in a rural area contact numbers for transportation needs should be on the contact list.
- The contact information of the family physician or referral to other services for follow-up appointments.



# Bullying .. Another form of Abuse



According to the federal government, bullying is defined with the following core elements:

- unwanted aggressive behavior
- observed or perceived power imbalance;
- repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition.



## Typical Traits of Individuals Who Bully

- lacks empathy
- has few friends
- “needs” power and control
- struggles with individual differences
- uses power and control at the expense of others
- suffers from low self-esteem
- empowered by causing conflict, or making others feel threatened, fearful, hurt

Women...



- gossips
- snipes
- member of a clique
- passive-aggressive behavior
- manipulates emotions

Men...

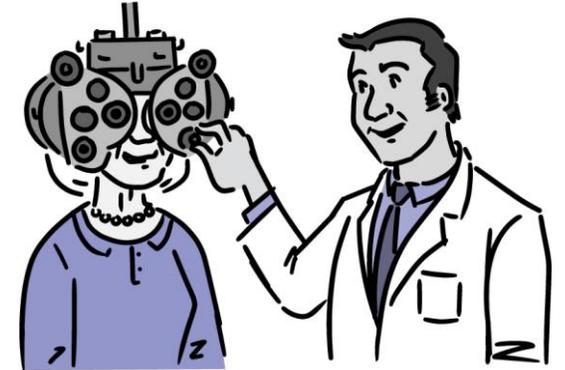


- direct
- spontaneous
- verbally or physically aggressive
- superiority complex
- overly protective

Source: (Bonifas & Frankel, 2012)

# Grief and Loss

Many elderly people experience numerous losses over a short period of time



**LOSSES and CHANGES** to which individuals may need to adapt across the life-span:

## BIRTH

(loss of )

- Pet
- Grandparent
- Child
- Changing Body image
- Parent
- Friend
- Social Status
- Spouse
- Hearing, Teeth, Sight
- Income
- Health
- Home
- Possessions
- Institutionalization
- Self-esteem
- Identity, etc



**DEATH**



# Isolation



Is objective and measurable – the reality of being separated from others, not by choice but by circumstance, such as COVID-19.

Social isolation affects more than 1 in 5 older adults.



When older adults withdraw from their communities, they are taking with them their knowledge, perspective and talents and we are all diminished.

Chronic isolation and loneliness are worse for health than smoking or obesity, especially in people over 50.

# Autonomy



Autonomy, which comes from the Greek word for "self-rule," is the ability or capacity to make informed choices, free of coercion, based on one's own personal beliefs and values. All adults are presumed to have decision-making capacity and are therefore afforded the right to self-determination, that is, the freedom to make decisions for themselves in all areas of their lives. The concept of autonomy reinforces this right to be free from unwanted interference, which means that there must be legal justification for any curtailment of autonomy.

Professional practice in the field of elder abuse prevention is guided by principles that highlight clients' freedom and civil liberties. In working with victims and vulnerable persons, professionals look for ways to prevent abuse that promote autonomy and self-determination. Those who work with victims of abuse are committed to preserving clients' freedom and civil liberties even when doing so may jeopardize client's health and safety.

## Exceptions to Client Autonomy

**Parens Patriae** :When individuals are deemed incapable of protecting themselves from harm, society assumes responsibility for providing protection. Parens patriae, or the "state as parent," is a common law principle, which authorizes the state to act as a benevolent parent to protect its citizens who are impaired and cannot protect themselves. It allows for government entities, including APS, to initiate both voluntary and involuntary services for individuals who cannot protect themselves.

**Police Power**: The right to autonomous decision-making must also be weighed against the State's interest in preserving and protecting life and property. The principle of police power gives police the authority to curtail and control certain personal behaviors to protect the public welfare, as well as individuals. Police may intervene to protect individuals and the community from physical harm or the threat of harm, loss of assets and property, and public nuisances.

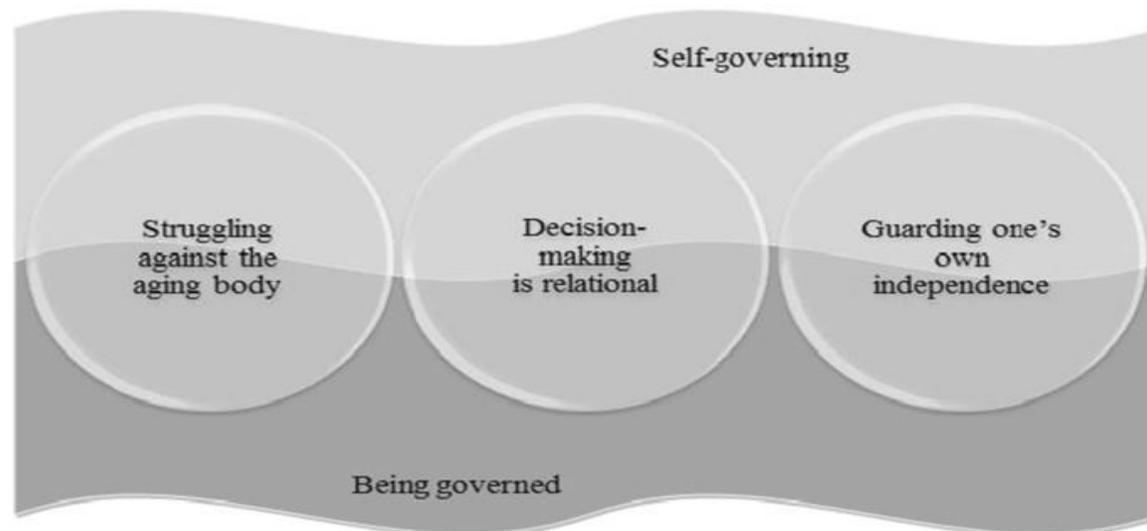
**Least Restrictive Alternatives**: Guardianship, however, is a very restrictive alternative in the sense that it strips people of very basic civil liberties. The principle of least restrictive alternatives dictates that other less restrictive options, such as informal money management, be considered prior to considering this option.

In offering service options to their clients, professionals look for the least restrictive alternatives - interventions that cause the least disruption or change in the older person's circumstances and which maximize their independence and freedom.

# Self Determination

Self-determination is a process in which a person has control both legal/ethical rights, and has the knowledge and ability to make decisions regarding his/her own free choice.

Self-determination in community-dwelling environment can be compromised when the elderly adult becomes frail or loses brain capacity; which becomes a real and present concern for decision-making in everyday life. Shifting between self governing and being governed could cause mild stages of depression.



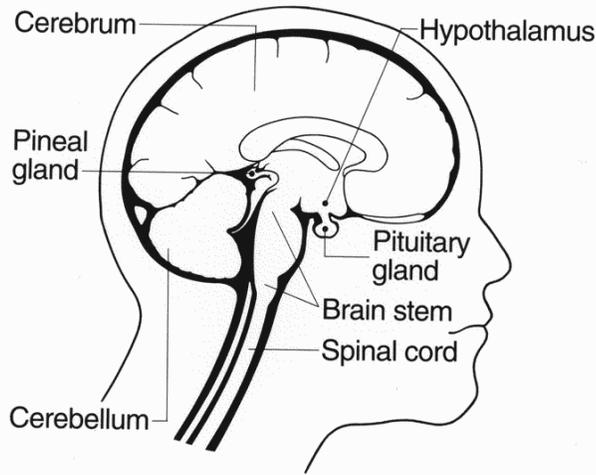
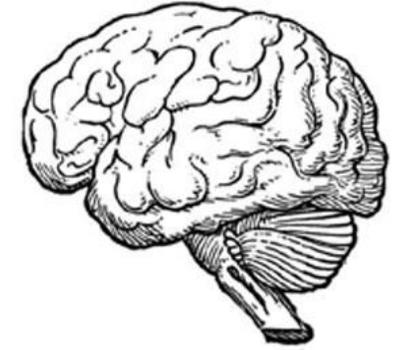
# Communicate- Connect- Care and Consider

There are implications when social connections are not satisfied. Loneliness is a universal human experience. There is a human need to be embedded, connected, integrated in a social network. When that social network is missing, “the consequences are very real in terms of mental and physical health”.

For most families, attention needs to be given to providing just in-time information— the right kind of information, the right amount of information, at the appropriate time.



# The Aging Brain and Expected changes



- As we expect normal aging brings expected changes in the areas of hearing, vision and mobility... normal changes to expected cognition include word-finding difficulties, decreased focus and attention, slower processing speeds (that tip of the tongue feeling) and slight memory difficulties.



# HUMAN DIGNITY



We are all looking for ways to best preserve our dignity and independence.

Help our aging population to sustain their quality of life as they transition in their golden years.....

Where you are today...is not where you may be tomorrow...

We don't get out of life alive... we all age regardless of:

Education

Income

Health

Status

Occupation

Wealth

Gender...etc

