

Unique Elements of Elder DV and Elder Abuse

- **Elder abuse is most often perpetrated by adult children or grandchildren**
 - 90% of all cases are perpetrated by family members
 - victims can feel directly responsible for the abuser and are therefore reluctant or unwilling to report the abuse
- **Victims do not often self-identify as victims of abuse**
 - today's youngest elders were in their 40s when DV was first declared a crime
- **Similar to child abusers, elder abusers rely on the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of their victims**
 - cognitive impairments and/or ageism mean victims are often not believed or are easily discredited
 - victims may depend on their abuser for basic necessities of life; neglect is the most common form of elder abuse
 - victims are often reluctant or unwilling to report due to an overwhelming fear of institutionalization or other loss of independence as a result of losing access to the abuser/caregiver
 - victims often die or become too sick to proceed by the time cases are brought to trial
 - ageism and assumptions of caregiver stress can result in services colluding with an abuser rather than assisting a victim
- **Financial abuse/exploitation are often integral to elder abuse**
 - 40% of all cases include financial abuse
 - older adults who are financially abused are three times more likely to die within 10 years than their non-abused peers
 - older adults do not recover from financial loss or ruin as quickly or easily as younger victims might
 - financial abuse is frequently perpetrated by fiduciaries

Table 1: Typology of Perpetrators

	Overwhelmed	Impaired	Narcissistic	Abusive	Sadistic
Motivation/Intention of perpetrator	To provide good care	To provide good care	To meet own needs via victim and victim's assets	To exert coercive control	To humiliate, terrorize, inflict pain
Victim's limitations, problems, and needs (i.e., incontinence, confusion, etc.)	Contribute to caregiver stress	Are misunderstood or mishandled by perpetrator	May provoke abusive reaction if annoying or inconvenient	One of many factors which can trigger perpetrator's explosive behavior	Not a primary motivating factor in this type of abuse but may be used to humiliate
Perpetrator's awareness of maltreatment	Recognizes problems	Unaware of problems	Does not care May not recognize	Justifies abusive behavior	Recognizes and enjoys maltreatment
Perpetrator's feelings/thoughts	Feels out-of-control Later feels shame, guilt, remorse	Feels OK about own actions	Self-absorbed Does not consider effects of maltreatment	Feels release/relief Believes victim deserves the abuse	Feels power, excitement, pleasure when abusing
Pattern of abuse	Episodic	Chronic or intermittent depending upon impairment	Chronic, may increase in severity over time	Chronic, with repeated temper outbursts	Chronic
Types of maltreatment typically seen	Verbal and/or physical outbursts; neglect	Neglect, misuse of restraints or meds, mismanagement of funds; physical abuse used to correct victim	Neglect & financial exploitation (may be extensive); threats or physical violence in service of exploitation	Coercive control of victim and resources; excessive expectations; psychological and physical abuse; some sexual abuse	Severe, chronic, deliberate, multifaceted abuse (may include physical, psychological, sexual, torture, or mutilation)
Perpetrator intimidates to prevent victim seeking help?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Typical victim response	Domestic cases—love attachment, gratitude; but upset regarding maltreatment	Victim often recognizes perpetrator's limitations, does not expect better	Victim feels used, or may be manipulated/tricked into believing perpetrator is trustworthy	Trauma, fear, hypervigilance, attempts to placate and appease perpetrator	Trauma, terror, submissive compliant behaviors to avoid abuse
Perpetrator seeks victims	No	No	Often	Yes	Yes
When confronted, perpetrator	-May deny due to embarrassment or fear of consequences; -May defend the behavior as inevitable; -May admit	Often acknowledges behavior but does not understand it is inappropriate	-Often avoids investigators -May attempt to charm or manipulate investigators and explain the behavior	-May lash out at investigators -May justify abusive behavior by blaming the victim -May manipulate	May attempt to charm, manipulate, avoid, or intimidate and threaten investigators
Facility cases occur when	Poor management practices exhaust and overwhelm normally competent staff	Poor hiring practices and compensation result in unqualified staff	Poor hiring/screening; poor ongoing supervision; inadequate monitoring policies	Poor hiring/screening; poor ongoing supervision; inadequate monitoring policies	Poor hiring/screening; poor ongoing supervision; inadequate monitoring policies
Intervention in domestic cases	Reduce caregiver burden and provide victim with additional caregivers	-Arrange additional qualified caregivers for victim -Offer services for perpetrator; if necessary, remove care responsibilities	-Provide victim counseling and support -Reduce victim's isolation and dependence on abuser -Empower victim -Criminal prosecution if appropriate	-Provide victim counseling and support -Reduce victim's isolation and dependence on abuser -Empower victim -Criminal prosecution if appropriate	-Provide victim counseling and support -Reduce victim's isolation and dependence on abuser -Empower victim -Criminal prosecution if appropriate
Intervention in facility cases	Reduce burden on staff (i.e., improve staffing patterns, training, supervision, and monitoring)	Terminate employment or reassign employee to appropriate tasks	-Terminate employment -Criminal prosecution if appropriate -Inform central registry	-Terminate employment -Criminal prosecution if appropriate -Inform central registry	-Terminate employment -Criminal prosecution if appropriate -Inform central registry