



Helping others to respond

Each and every one of us can uphold the rights of older Australians to live independent, autonomous lives that are free from abuse, mistreatment or neglect.

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Responding to Elder Abuse

compass an EAAA project
GUIDING ACTION ON ELDER ABUSE



Note: You can find this video on [Compass.info](https://compass.info)

Why what you do is important

It can be really worrying when someone you care about or someone you see is being hurt or abused. **But your help can make a great difference to someone who is abused.**

If the older person feels supported and encouraged, they may feel stronger and more able to make decisions. If they feel judged or criticised, they could be afraid to tell anyone else about the abuse again.

Don't be put off or worry that you may be interfering or that the difficulties are a private matter. If your concern is genuine, no one will judge you for taking positive steps. It is unlikely you'll make things 'worse' by expressing concern.

Some Related Articles

Access helpful Australian resources and service providers to help you better understand ageism and its impact on the elderly

[More information on Compass.info](https://compass.info)



What you can do: 5 steps you can take

Witnessing abuse in any form can be confronting and upsetting. It may also leave you asking questions like 'How can I help?', or 'Who should I turn to?'. Use the following five-step framework on Compass to help guide your response.

1. Identify if abuse is taking place

Get to know [the signs that indicate abuse](#). Ask questions and gather information. Some questions you may want to ask include "Has anyone hurt you?", "Are you frightened of anyone?" and "Do you feel safe staying where you are?"

2. Provide emotional support

Listen to the older person and allow them the time they need to share their experience. Acknowledge what they are saying and validate their feelings. Maintain a calm appearance and be non-judgemental. Help identify the steps they can take, don't make promises you can't keep and maintain their confidentiality.

3. Plan for safety

Take steps to make the older person and others are safe if you feel they may be in immediate danger.

4. Call 1800 ELDERHelp ([1800 353 374](tel:1800353374))

This free number will redirect you to an existing phone service near you. Alternatively, you can contact a service you feel might be best placed to help the older person using the 'Find a service' links below. Even if you're unsure of who to talk to, the most important thing is to take action. Help is free, confidential and easily accessible.

5. Write it down

Write down your concerns and actions in as much detail as you can. Try to include dates, locations along with what was said and seen. If the older person is aware of what is happening and refuses your assistance, write this too and make a note of your concerns.

Remember: the personal safety of the older person and others comes first

Responding to an emergency to help safeguard an older person and others should always come first.

If it's an emergency, call [000](tel:000)

If it's not an emergency:

- Contact a [support service](#)
- If they refuse your help, safely provide them with contact information for services in case they wish to use them at a later date

Experiencing abuse yourself?

Advice and information on who to turn to and what you can do.

[More information on Compass.info](https://compass.info)



Other ways you can help

Think about your responsibility

Some abusive acts, especially physical or sexual assaults, are classified as crimes. Although there is no legal requirement to report them, all of us have a moral duty to look out for older people.

Be gentle

Understand that older people may not want to cause trouble, as they may feel ashamed or be worried about the consequences and the potential for pay back.

Be considerate of family ties

Elders may feel protective of their adult children, even if that child is mistreating or exploiting them. An older person is more likely to accept help if they think their adult child's needs will be considered and addressed.

Offer reassurance

A kind word can go a long way. Reassure the older person that help is available.

Keep checking, keep caring

If an older person refuses to get help, provide them with emotional support. Keep checking in on them where possible.

Give them control

It's important that an older person feels in control of seeking and getting help.

Things you should avoid

Avoid judgement

If the older person says they love their suspected abuser, or if they leave but then return to the situation, don't be critical. Leaving an abusive person or situation can take time, and your support is really important.

Avoid confrontation

It is generally not advisable to confront the abuser without careful thought.

Avoid blame

Avoid asking questions like 'what did you do for them to treat you like that?' or 'why do you put up with it?' These questions suggest that it is somehow the elder person's fault.

Avoid giving advice

Try not to offer advice or tell them what you would do. This will only reduce their confidence to make her own decisions. Instead, listen and give information.

Avoid pressure

Avoid forcing the older person to act or make decisions on their behalf. Focus on listening and supporting them to make their own decisions. They know their own situation best.

Barriers to seeking help

People have every right to report elder abuse and get help to make it stop, yet they don't always do so.

Many people who experience elder abuse don't report it and seek help, according to the final report of the [National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study](#) conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) in 2021. [Learn more](#)

Responding to Elder Abuse

This webinar brings together a panel of experienced professionals from various fields of expertise to help you better respond to abuse and neglect in all its forms.

[Visit Compass YouTube channel to watch video](#)

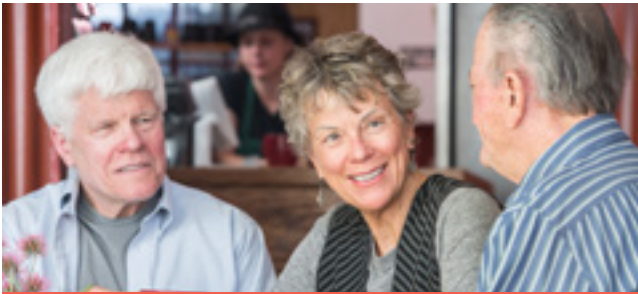


CONTENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Content for parts of this page have been gathered from the following sources:

- [Relationships Australia Victoria](#)
- [The Public Trustee: Let's talk about Elder Abuse](#)
- [Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Western Australia: Elder Abuse Protocol](#)
- [Seniors Rights Victoria](#)
- [Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria](#)
- [Seniors Rights Service NSW](#)

Other topics you might be interested in that you can find on [Compass.info](https://compass.info)



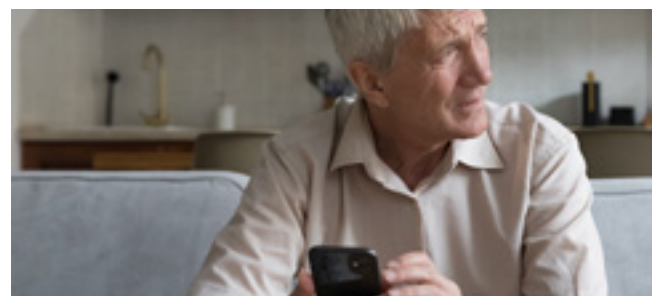
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