



Elder Abuse Prevention Unit

[www.eapu.com.au](http://www.eapu.com.au)

## Psychological Abuse of Older People

The World Health Organisation defines Elder Abuse as "a **single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person**".

- Know your rights and don't be afraid to assert them.
- Seek a wide social network beyond your immediate family and remain active within the community.
- Be aware of your right to confidentiality, privacy and the right to refuse anyone intervening on your behalf.

The EAPU provides a confidential telephone **Helpline: 1300 651 192** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Service funded by:



Queensland Government

### What is Psychological Abuse?

Psychological abuse is the infliction of mental anguish, involving actions that cause fear of violence, isolation or deprivation, and feelings of shame, indignity or powerlessness (ANPEA). Psychological abuse may be verbal or non-verbal and is usually characterised by a pattern of behaviour repeated over time and intended to maintain a hold of fear over the victim.

### Examples:

- Verbal intimidation - being forced into making decisions against your will.
- Humiliation and harassment - being called names or experiencing behaviours that are degrading, in a public or private place, being treated like a child.
- Shouting.
- Threats of physical Harm - e.g. "If you don't hurry up I'll give you something to be quick about".
- Threats of institutionalisation - "Do what I say or I'll put you in a home".
- Withholding of affection - refusing access to grandchildren.
- Removal of decision-making powers.

### Signs of Psychological Abuse

- Loss of interest in self or environment
- Passivity
- Ambivalence towards family member or carer
- Apathy
- Fearfulness
- Lack of eye contact with practitioner, carer or other person
- Huddled or nervous around carer or other person
- Reluctance to talk openly
- Helplessness
- Withdrawal
- Insomnia/sleep deprivation



UnitingCare Community Values Compassion | Respect | Justice | Working Together | Leading through Learning

UnitingCare Community Services Lifeline | Child and Family Care | Counselling | Crisis Support | Disability Support | Social Inclusion