



Elder Abuse Prevention Unit

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

## Risk Factors Associated with Elder Abuse

Elder Abuse does not discriminate – any older person is at risk of abuse.

- Plan for the future while you are well, healthy and independent.
- Do not give up control of your assets while you can still manage them.
- Have your pensions and cheques credited directly to your bank account.
- Ask for help to fully understand all legal documents before signing.
- Know your rights and don't be afraid to assert them.

There is no clear reason for abuse. Its causes are both complex and concealed. However, experience suggests certain factors are related to abuse, and that the existence of more than one of these factors places a person at high risk of abuse. Key risk factors for abuse include: carer stress, dependency, family conflict, isolation, psychological problems and addictive behaviours.

### Carer Stress

Caring for a person who is frail or who has special needs is stressful. In many cases, other contributory factors are also present and this additional stress on the carer appears to be the factor that triggers the abuse.

### Dependency

Clients are at risk of abuse from people with whom they live and share a relationship of dependency. This dependency may be due to physical impairments such as physical frailty, disability, or cognitive impairments such as dementia. These impairments may hinder the person leaving the abusive situation or reporting the situation. Some perpetrators of abuse, who are dependent on the person they care for, may feel trapped or powerless and perpetrate abuse because of frustration or fear. Whilst clients who are abused are often dependent on others for all or part of their day-to-day care, the perpetrator of the abuse may also be dependent on the person in order to meet their own physical, psychological, social, emotional or financial needs.

### Family conflict

Abuse can be a continuation of domestic violence or family violence that re-emerges as abuse in the caring situation. Similarly, a child who was previously abused may now be a primary carer and repeat the cycle of abuse to a dependent parent or child. In some families violence is considered the normal reaction to stress, and it may continue from generation to generation. People are also at risk when two or more generations live together and intergenerational conflict exists. In cross-cultural situations where two or more generations hold different cultural values or roles, tension and conflict can place dependent people at risk of abuse.

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

Service funded by:



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