

Elders Supporting Elders To End Abuse (ESETEA)

Respect & Safety for All



Advisory:
This publication deals with elder abuse. Some contents may be disturbing. For support or information the Seniors' Abuse Helpline is available at 780-454-8888.

Welcome

This magazine is about elder abuse. It is not a pleasant topic. Maybe the contents will be uncomfortable, or even disturbing. (If it is too upsetting, be sure to find someone to provide support.)

Elder abuse is seldom out in the open. Some of us are ashamed to talk about it, or even let ourselves notice it. Some of us may feel the victims deserve what happens to them. Abusers are often careful to keep evidence hidden, maybe even to keep victims isolated from contact with others.

But unless we face the tough reality, it will continue to hurt people.

This publication is a product of a project to invite seniors to get together and explore how they can support each other and educate about abuse. Often we respond best to our peers, rather than experts and authorities. But it can be hard to sit down and talk honestly about such an issue. So you will find some activities that offer ideas to break the ice, to open the topic in a more gentle way.

What matters is more attention to the issue. More of us need to understand how it happens, what signs to notice that it might be happening, what we can do if we are concerned, and how to prevent it. Each of us can do our own small bit to reduce abuse and to support people who are victims. We hope this magazine will get you thinking about your first step to be a part of the solution.





Elder abuse matters to all of us – and it touches more lives than we may imagine, as often it is not reported or addressed. It may affect us because we hear about it or see evidence in a life that touches ours. It may affect us because we want to understand it and do something about it. It may affect us because we have ideas that could be helpful.

To see why it matters and how our lives are interconnected by it, a helpful starting point may simply be finding a way to share each of our personal connections, as one group has done with this webbing exercise, and beginning to talk about what is noticed – Where are there gaps in knowledge? Where are there starting points we share? Where are the most urgent needs?

It's a serious problem!

We hear little about elder abuse, and family abuse more broadly. It doesn't make the headlines. But it is a dangerous reality and needs our attention. We need to bring it out of the shadows.

One in 10
Alberta seniors
may be a victim
of abuse

82 percent of people
over 50 years old
experience ageism,
the seed of abuse

Alberta is the
third highest
province in Canada
for elder abuse

In a 1999 study, approximately seven percent of seniors interviewed reported they had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child, caregiver, or spouse within the past five years – which means at least 23,000 seniors in Alberta

A World Health Organization (WHO) study suggests rates of abuse of older people are high in institutions such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, with two in three staff reporting that they have committed abuse in the past year.

The WHO study found 11.6 percent of elders reporting psychological abuse and 6.8 percent reporting financial abuse

The total economic cost in Canada annually of family violence is at least \$6 billion – But the cost of suffering and even loss of life cannot be measured



Act it out

Sometimes talking about a painful issue is difficult. For some, using drama may help.

Have a look at two examples of seniors creating short skits to express some experiences with elder abuse. Finding the words and expressions and movements to capture the emotions and tensions and other dynamics of a situation may help clarify the hidden realities and the choices that are involved.

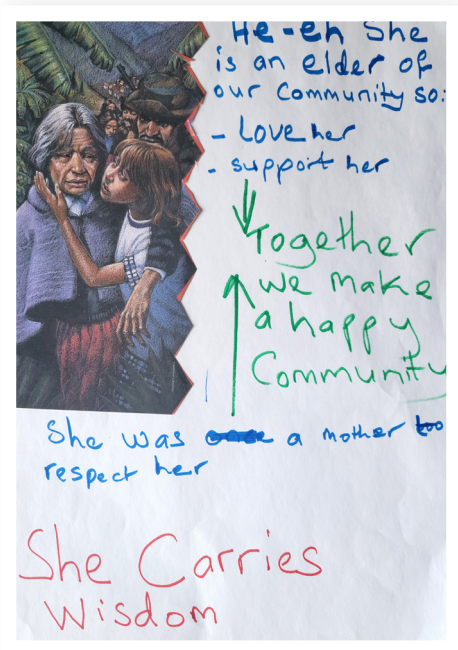
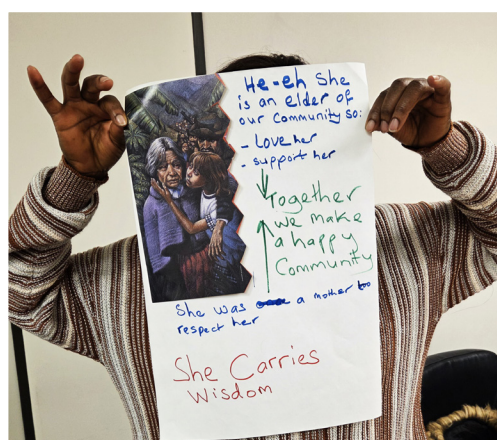
And sharing your creation may get others thinking – and talking – too.

“Who you gonna call?” and “Dad’s family meeting” can both be found in the Resources section of the Canadians for a Civil Society website at www.ccsorg.ca.

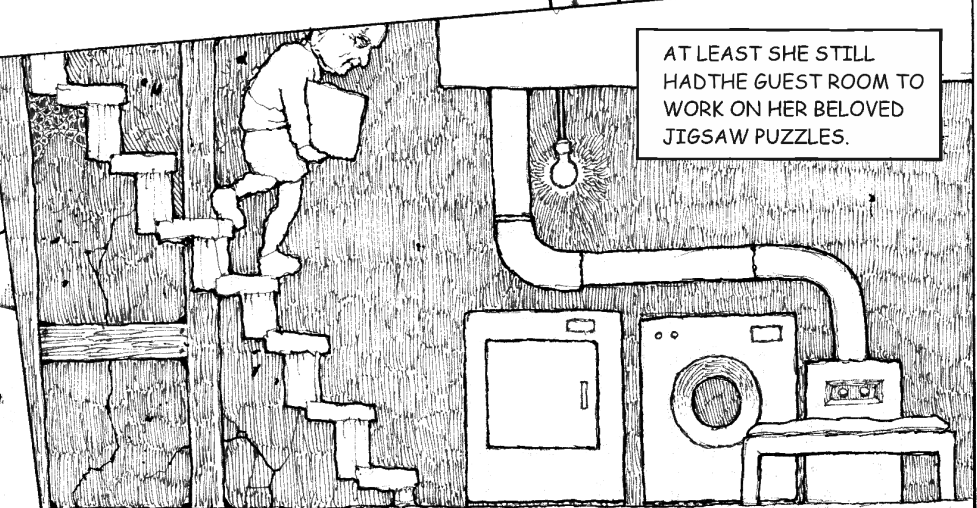
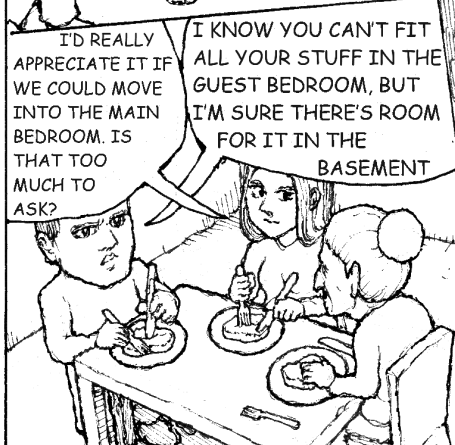
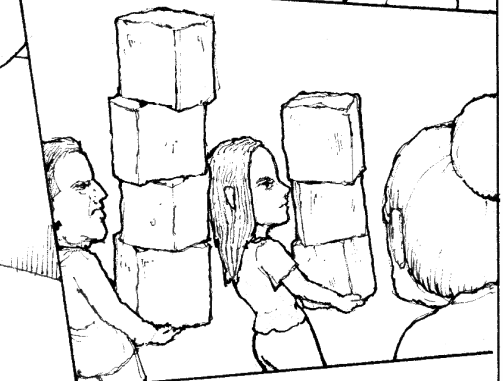
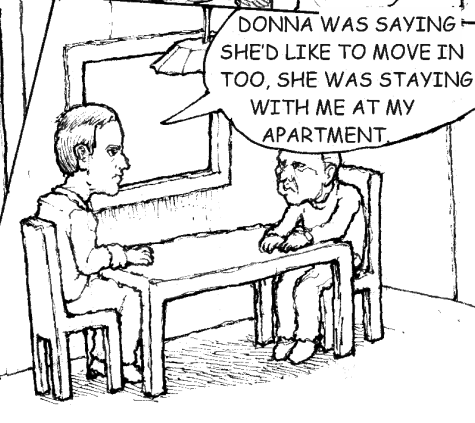
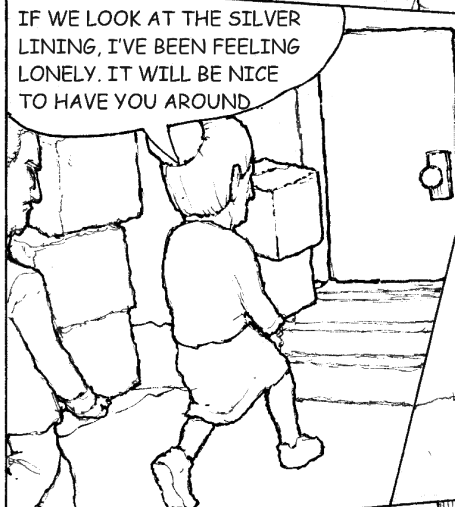
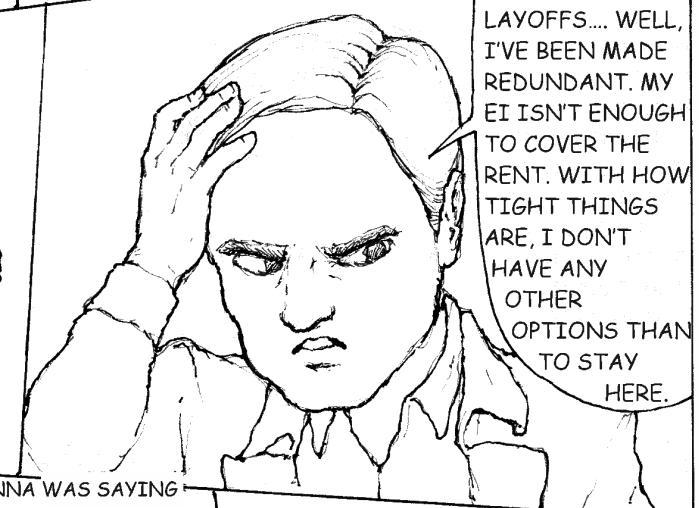
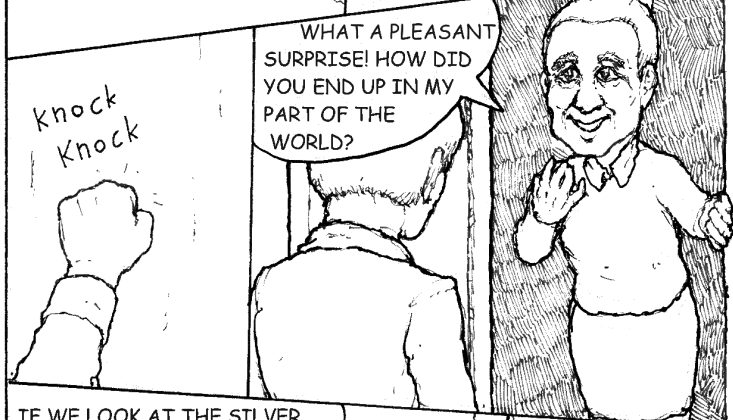


Create an educational poster

Throughout this booklet, you will find examples of posters created during a series of elder abuse workshops with community groups.

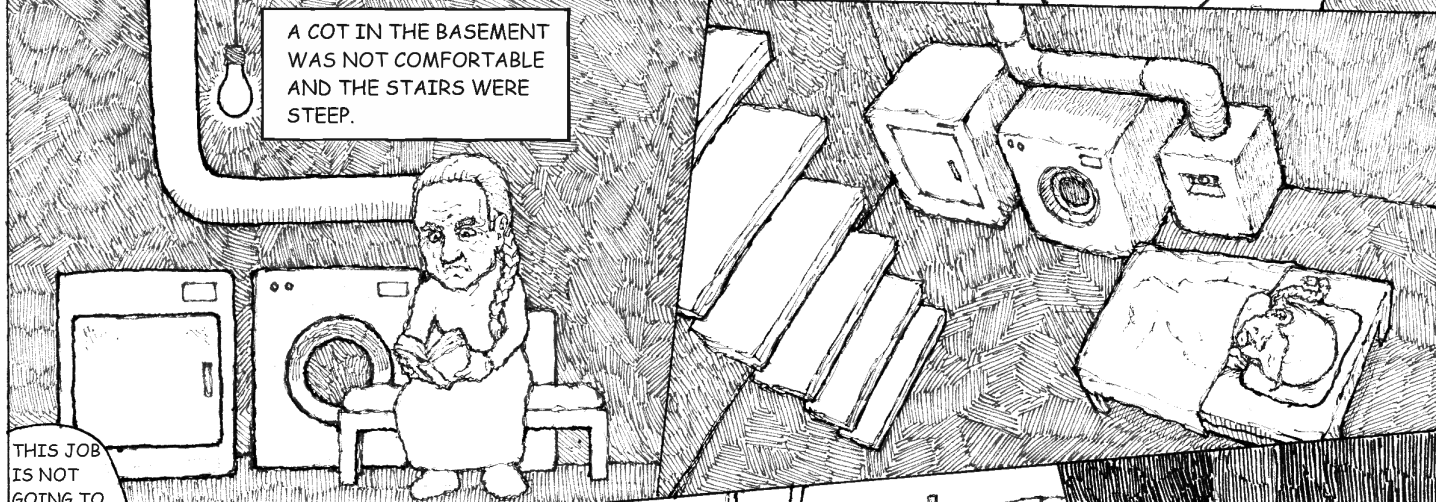


Welcome Home, Son





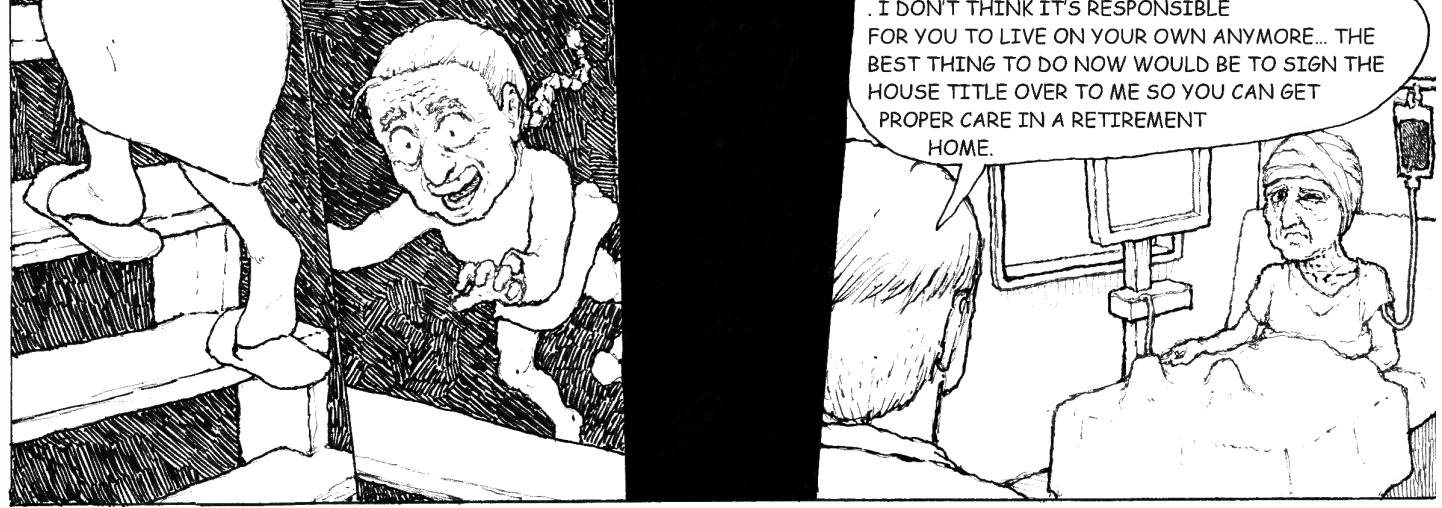
GREAT NEWS ON THE JOB SEARCH. I WAS ABLE TO PICK UP A POSITION TELEMARKETING, SO I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO MOVE OUT OF THE GUEST BEDROOM SO I CAN USE IT FOR MY OFFICE.



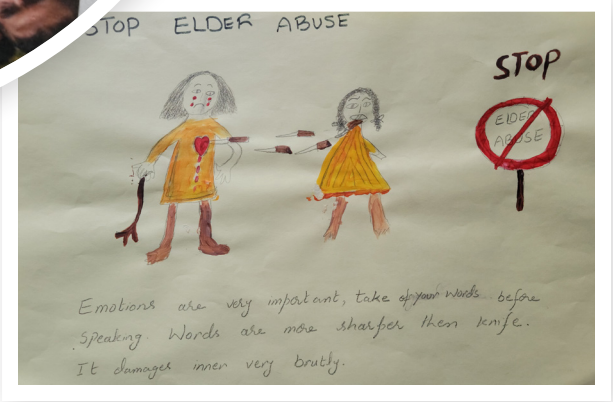
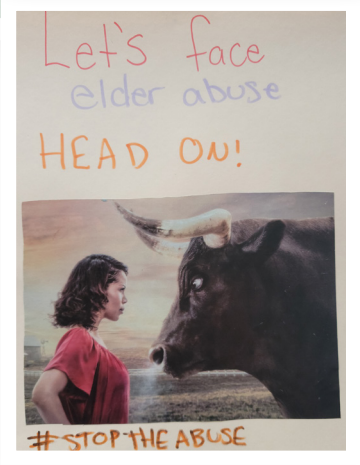
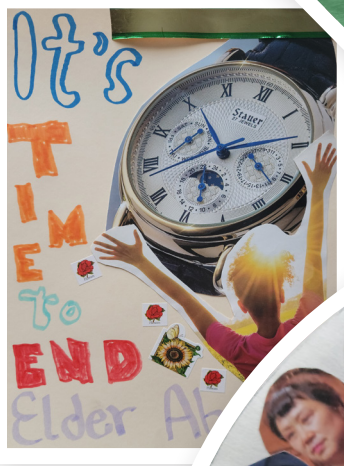
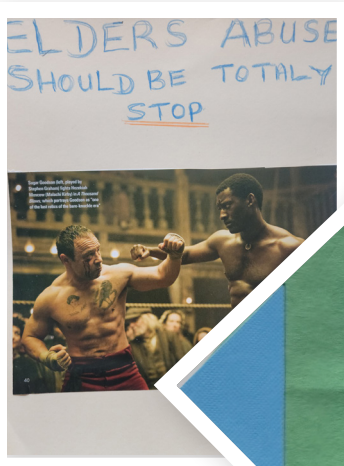
A COT IN THE BASEMENT WAS NOT COMFORTABLE AND THE STAIRS WERE STEEP.



THIS JOB IS NOT GOING TO WORK LONG TERM, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU SIGNED THE CAR REGISTRATION OVER TO ME SO I CAN GET INTO A SERIOUS JOB SEARCH. AND HAVE OUR SUPPER READY FOR 5



. I DON'T THINK IT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU TO LIVE ON YOUR OWN ANYMORE.. THE BEST THING TO DO NOW WOULD BE TO SIGN THE HOUSE TITLE OVER TO ME SO YOU CAN GET PROPER CARE IN A RETIREMENT HOME.



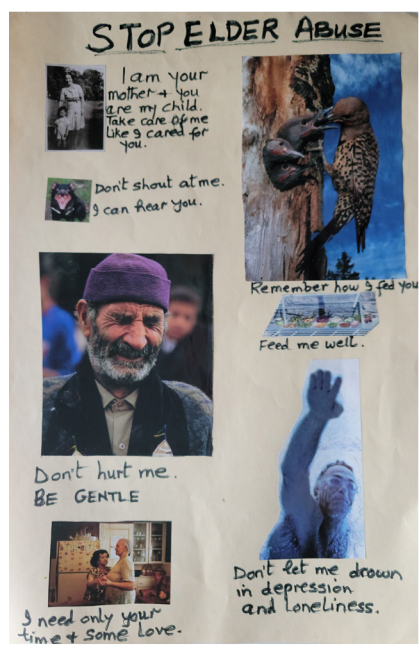
Who? What? When? Why? Where?



Because there is a lot of secrecy around elder abuse, many people know little about it, or believe myths and misinformation. Some things we DO know:

Offenders are usually much younger than victims. About 40 percent are under 40 years of age and 40 percent between the ages of 41 and 59. The majority are males. About 60 percent are relatives of the victim.

Elder abuse happens most often in the home, the perpetrators family members or professional caregivers. Abuse may be part of a longstanding pattern of abuse in a family. It may develop because of changes in the physical and cognitive condition of seniors, growing dependency on others for care may be a factor.



Social isolation can increase the likelihood of abuse. It may be a deliberate strategy for keeping abuse secret, or it may be an accidental result of such things as time constraints, finances, or social barriers (language, distance) making it difficult for elders to socialize.

One Ontario study found close to a third of staff had witnessed rough handling of patients in nursing homes, staff verbally abusing patients by yelling or swearing, or embarrassing comments being made to patients. Ten percent witnessed staff members hitting or shoving patients.

Seniors are less likely to report being victims of crime or spousal abuse than non-seniors.

Many crimes against seniors are not reported to police but are reported to health professionals, community groups, and financial institutions.



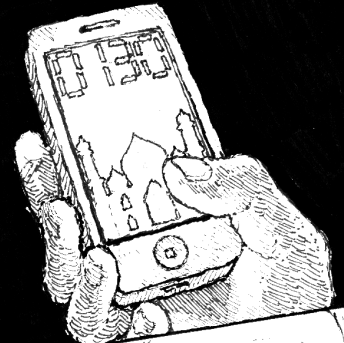
Senior victims of violence usually know their attackers, who are likely to be family members, friends, or acquaintances.

Males report more incidents of violence than females. Men report more violence at the hands of acquaintances and strangers, women report more family-related incidents.

(From Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, 2009, report)



GOODBYE, WE'RE MEETING THE KOLIS AND THEY ALWAYS WANT TO KEEP US THERE LATE. MAKE SURE IT'S DONE BEFORE WE'RE BACK



GOOD MORNING, I'M NOT FEELING WELL SO I'D LIKE A DAY OFF FROM WORK. COULD I BORROW A LITTLE MONEY SO I CAN GO SEE MY FRIEND AT THE MALL?



YOU'RE SO SELFISH! LIFE IN CANADA IS EXPENSIVE! YOU KNOW WE CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE YOU SPENDING MONEY

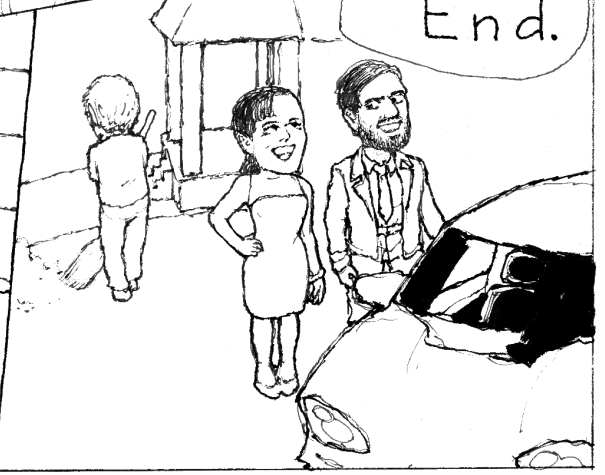


REMEMBER, YOU'RE JUST A VISITOR HERE. IF YOU CAN'T PULL YOUR WEIGHT WE'LL HAVE TO SEND YOU BACK

End.



WE'LL BE OUT OF THE HOUSE TODAY! MAKE SURE THE KIDS ARE FED AND IN BED ON TIME!



Write an acrostic poem

Create your own message!

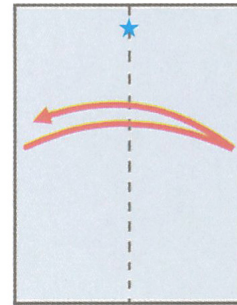
Speak up against ageism
Take indicators of abuse seriously
Observe warning signs of abuse
Prevent isolation – include older people

Educate about the issue
Listen to older people
Demand respect for older people
End the silence – address the issues
Report suspected abuse

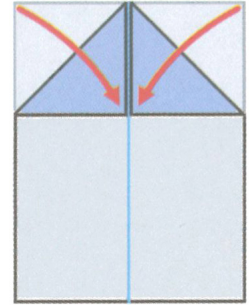
Ask questions, offer support
Be part of an elder-friendly community
Use your voice on behalf of older people
Stay in touch with older people
Excuses won't help – do your part!

Ending elder abuse takes off

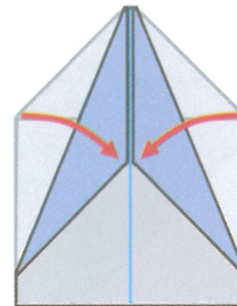
Have an airshow! Fold paper planes with messages about elder abuse and set them loose in a room, read a message that comes near and send it on . . .



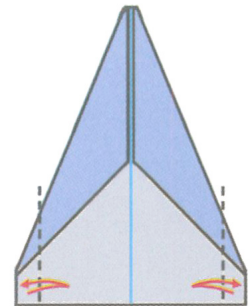
1. Fold in half, then unfold.



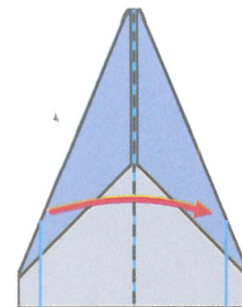
2. Fold the top corners inward to the center crease.



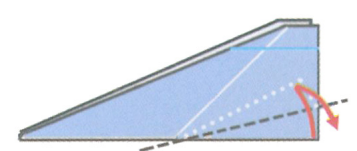
3. Fold the sides to the center crease.



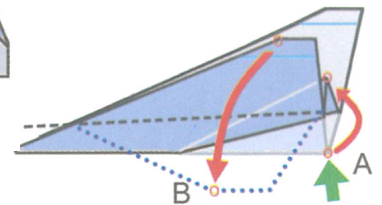
4. Fold the edges of the wings. Then unfold.



5. Fold in half.

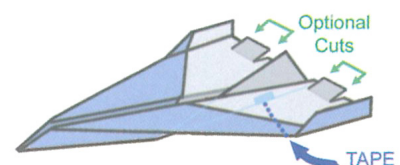


6. To form the tail fin, fold the bottom edge on the angle indicated. Crease and unfold.



7. Reverse fold the tail fin as shown with green arrow (A). Fold the wing downward (B). Repeat on the other wing.

Delta Dart
by Kyong H. Lee



8. Fold the winglets up. If desired, cut elevators and bend up slightly for best flight. Tape the bottom of the tail fin. Adjust the wings to be flat.

Make a secret messenger

When we made them as children the questions asked may have been 'Do I have a boyfriend?' or 'Do I need a chocolate bar?' but make your questions about elder abuse and get a conversation going. Use a piece of paper that is at least 15cm x 15cm large.

Create your own message!

Safety for older people

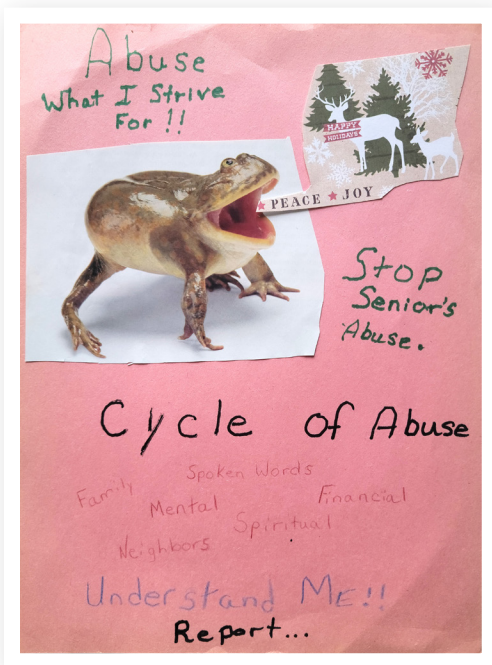


Across

- 2. If there is immediate danger, call them
- 4. Abuse happens when this is taken away from you
- 5. Operates emergency shelter for victims of abuse
- 6. Any action by a trusted person that causes danger for an older person (2 words)
- 8. Lack of contact with others may be a problem
- 10. When no one pays attention, trouble may arise

Down

- 1. Abuse that steals a person's money
- 3. Abuse that uses insults and hurtful words
- 5. May be used to help someone unable to care for themselves (2 words)
- 7. Most abusers are from this group
- 9. Provincial government office that can assist people unable to make their own decisions (acronym)



Myths and facts – test your knowledge

1. Elder abuse occurs mostly in nursing homes.

_____ Myth _____ Fact

Elder abuse does occur in nursing homes, but it most often happens at home, behind closed doors in every community, regardless of socioeconomic status.

2. If there are no bruises or physical signs of abuse, there is nothing to worry about.

_____ Myth _____ Fact

There are many types of abuse that will not result in outward physical evidence. Making threats to get money, denying visits from friends or grandchildren or to a place of worship, or over or under medicating are only a few situations of abuse without physical evidence. “People can twist somebody’s arm and leave no marks,” said Kate Wilber, a professor of gerontology at the University of Southern California. Another problem: some people may interpret bruises and other physical signs as the result of other age-related issues, such as increased risk of falls. Or an older adult being denied food may lose weight, but people may assume it’s due to other physical ailments.

3. Older women and older men are equally vulnerable to abuse.

_____ Myth _____ Fact

Being older and female is a risk factor. A 2006 Canadian study found that the proportion of older female victims (45 percent) who were victimized by a family member was almost twice that of older male victims (25 percent). Regardless of gender, those with some type of cognitive impairment are at greatest risk of being abused. Information – Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Department of Justice Canada

4. If older people say they are not being abused, it didn’t happen.

_____ Myth _____ Fact

Many elder abuse victims decide not to tell anyone what happened to them, experts say. Many don’t report abuse because they are afraid of getting a loved one in trouble. Some don’t report because they worry the alternative – such as going to a nursing home – would be worse. People may also be ashamed and blame themselves. Abusers may threaten a move to the nursing home or other harm to the victim if the person tells anyone so personal fear leads to silence.

5. Elder abuse is not that big a deal.

_____ Myth _____ Fact

An estimated one in 10 older adults are victims of elder abuse (Nursing Home Abuse Center, n.d) but only one in five instances of elder abuse are reported (WHO and INPEA, 2002). Alberta ranks 3rd highest among provinces for elder abuse – approximately 23,000 older adults are experiencing one or more forms of abuse in Alberta (Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council, 2019). In Canada, total annual cost of prevention and intervention with elder abuse is \$6 billion (Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council, 2019). Victims of abuse are three times more likely than those who weren’t mistreated to die prematurely.

We all need to be well informed if we are to end elder abuse. More information about elder abuse is available at: <https://www.alberta.ca/get-help-elder-abuse>.

The Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council facilitates sharing knowledge, resources and tools about elder abuse amongst people who work with older adults in Alberta. Website: www.albertaelderabuse.ca

Checklist: WE can each do something

Elder abuse can be frightening or embarrassing to face, but if you are concerned it may be taking place it is dangerous and irresponsible to ignore evidence or your concerns.

Often it will be a friend, neighbour, or family member who will notice the possibility abuse is happening – just as these are also the most likely perpetrators. It may not be easy to take action, but it is important. No one else may notice, so your silence may let a bad situation become worse.

What can you do?

- If you believe someone is in imminent danger, call the police immediately at 911.
- If there is no imminent danger, call the dispatch line for your local police. Police may be able to provide information on community resources.
- If the abuse is happening in a public care facility such as a lodge, hospital, or long-term care facility, you are required by law to report to **Protections for Persons in Care** at 1-888-357-9339.
- Talk to the person you are concerned about. Be open and supportive. Ensure the person knows the abuse is not their fault and that help is available. Do not tell them what to do, but be clear they can count on your support.
- Encourage and/or assist the person to contact community agencies. For resource information in your area, as well as 24 hour support and referral, call the provincial **Family Violence Info Line** at 310-1818. In Edmonton the **Seniors Abuse Helpline** is also available 24 hours at 780-454-8888.
- Unless the person being abused is unable to care for themselves or make sound personal decisions because of a disability, they have the right to choose where and how to live. Keep checking on what the person wants and ask what support you can give.
- If temporary emergency housing is needed in **Edmonton**, contact the **Sage Seniors Safe House** at 780-702-1520.
- Become familiar with the information in **Staying Safe: A resource for older adults living in Alberta** available to read and download at heyzine.com/flipbook/stayingsafe.
- Promote more availability of information in the community—at faith communities, community centres, medical offices, libraries, workplace bulletin boards, social media...

Get help – Learn more

Emergency? Call 911

24 Hour Crisis help

- Seniors abuse helpline 780-454-8888
- Family violence information line (170 languages available) phone or text 310-1818

Urgent support services

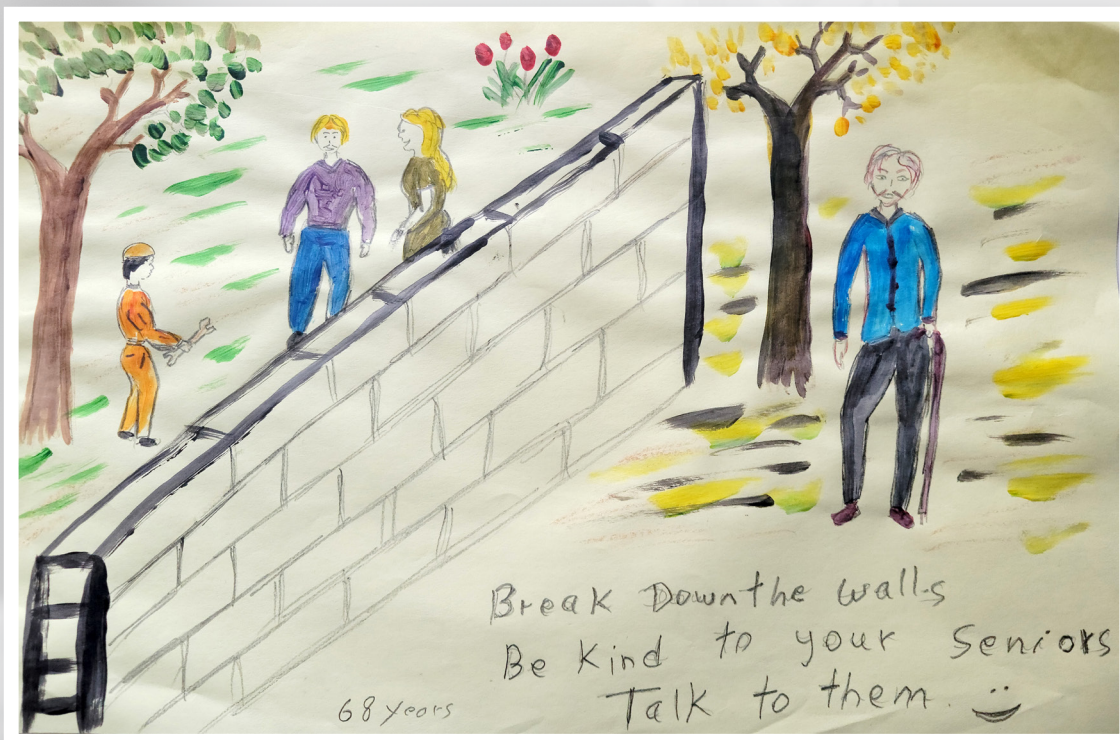
- Family violence prevention 780-423-1635
- Elder abuse intake line 780-477-2929
- Elder abuse resource and supports 780-477-2929 (ask for Senior Resource Coordinator)

Safe accommodations

- Sage seniors safe house 780-702-1520
- Other shelters- www.acws.ca

Information

- www.albertaelderabuse.ca
- 211 Community information & referrals



Thank you!

This project was initiated by Canadians for a Civil Society (www.ccsorg.ca) with funding from the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program.

More than 100 seniors participated in discussions and workshops and shared ideas and experiences. The contributions of each one were important.

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Esther Numfor and Jim Gurnett, Project Coordinators

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