

**Elder Abuse:
it's time for action!**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference Friday 15 June 2007

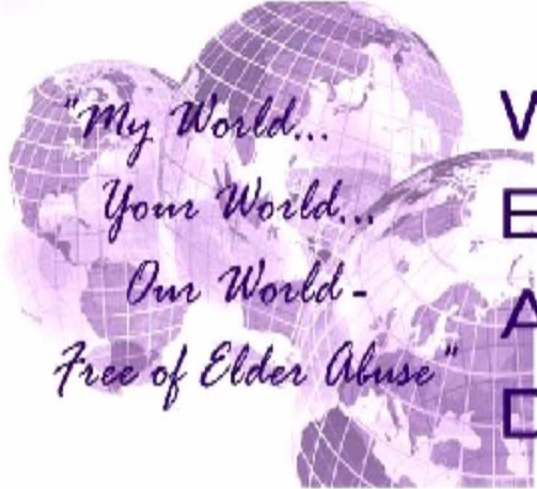


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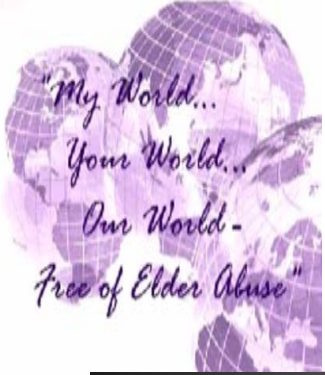


June 15, 2007

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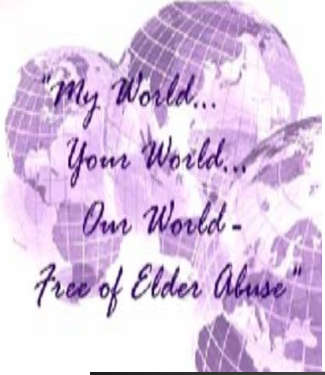
Elder Abuse: A Psychological Perspective

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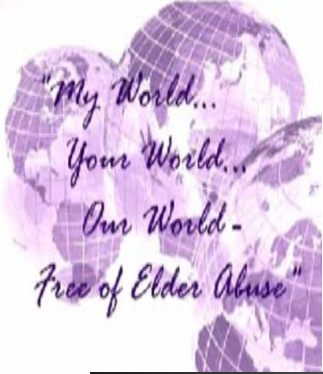


Overview

- Definitions.
- Why a psychological perspective?
- What is Psychological Abuse?
- Psychological Consequences of Abuse.
- Relationship gone wrong - Why?
- Women - as agents and recipients.
- Moving Ahead

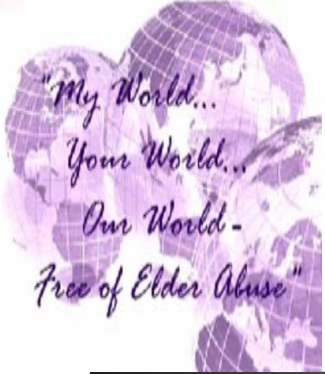


Definitions of Elder Abuse



Australian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (APNEA)

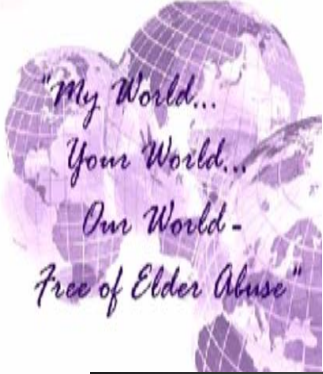
- *“any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust,*
- *which results in harm to an older person.*
- *Abuse can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social, and/or neglect”.*



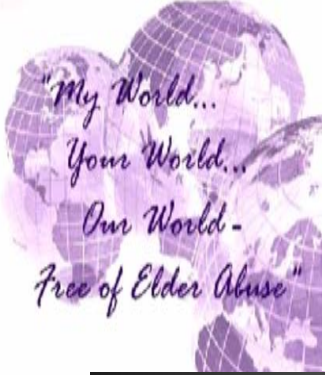
International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)



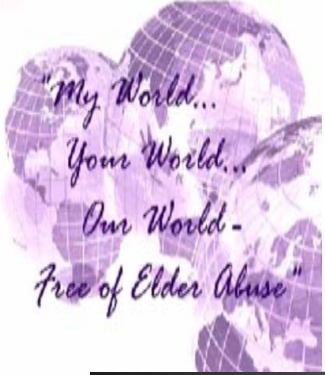
- "a single, or repeated, act or **lack of appropriate action**,
- occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust
- which causes harm **or distress** to an older person"



- Definitions require a **cultural context**
- in developing countries, other issues need to be seen within the total framework.
 - traditional societies, older widows exposed to forced marriages
 - accusations of witchcraft directed at isolated older women.
- is typically **under-reported** in most cultures.
- Prevalence rates/estimates in selected developed countries - range from 1% to 10%.
- Even if extent is unknown, social and moral significance is obvious.
- WHO is advocating a global strategy for the prevention of the abuse of older people.

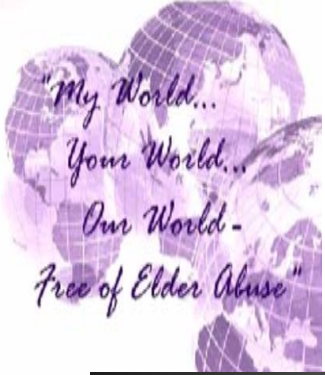


Why a psychological perspective?



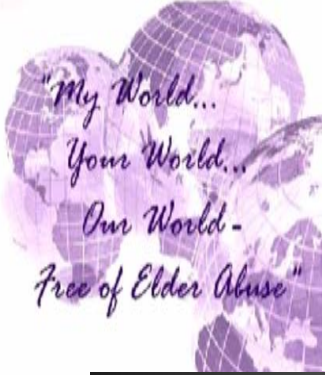
Human Behaviour is at heart of Psychology

- Elder Abuse is a behaviour that occurs in a relationship
 - Intimate
 - Societal / structural
 - Cultural
 - Functional
- Such behaviours have socio-emotional and interpersonal consequences

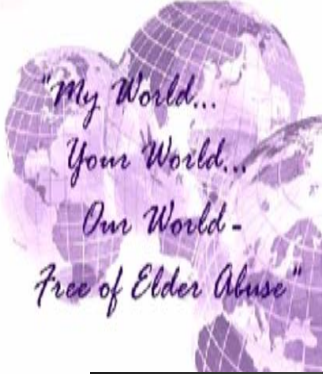


More reasons for a Psychological Perspective

- Behaviours can be predicted
- Behaviours can be changed
(of recipient and abuser)
- *Psychological Abuse is the most prevalent form of elder abuse*
 - Alone or along with other/s

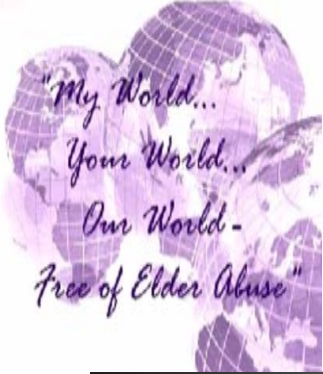


What is Psychological or Emotional Abuse?



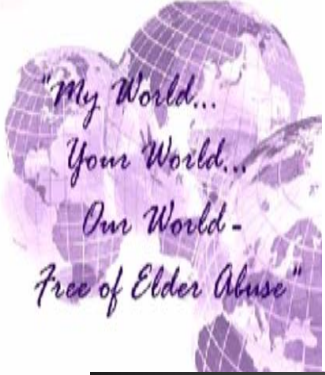
Psychological Abuse

- Multifaceted and complex
- Mental anguish, stemming from actions that cause
 - fear of violence, isolation or deprivation,
 - feelings of shame, indignity, or powerlessness
- Verbal intimidation -
 - being forced to make decisions against one's will
 - not having a say in decision making
- Humiliation or harassment -
 - being called names, in public or private
- Intimidation - threats of physical harm, institutionalisation, withholding privileges



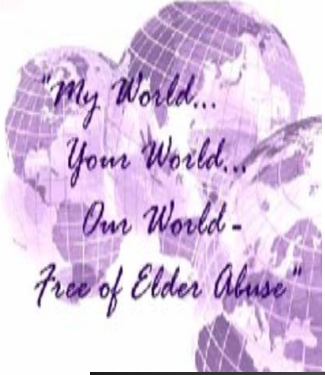
Elders on Psychological Abuse

- Neglect - isolation, abandonment, social exclusion (self-neglect?)
- Violation - of human, legal and/or medical rights
- Deprivation - of choices, decisions, status, finances, RESPECT & FREEDOM
it is the elder's perception of the relationship that defines abuse

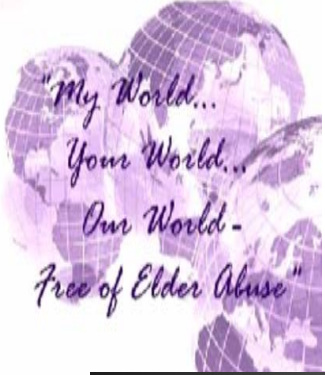


Psychological Punishment of Relatively Independent

- Often comes from children
- Paternalistic approach - discounts elders' own capacities
- Over-protectiveness may be resented
 - Especially if it involves withholding information so as not to cause anxiety , worry or anguish to
- Beneficence vs autonomy

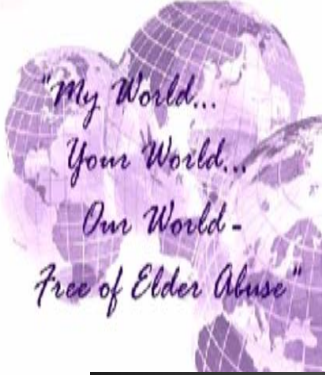


Psychological Consequences of Abuse.



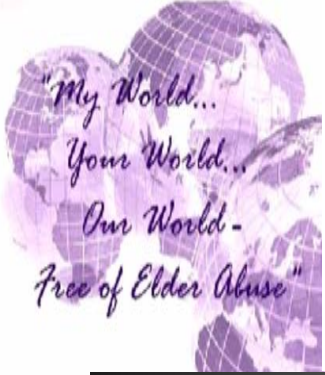
Psychological Symptoms

- Learned helplessness, external control
- Erosion of Self-esteem
- Guilt, shame, fear, anxiety
- Denial, neglect (passive aggression)
- Depression or distress
- PTSD in extreme cases
- Alienation (systemic)



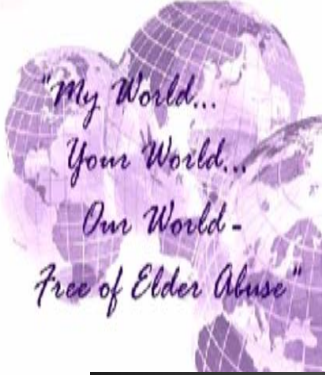
Predisposing Characteristics

- Age (being older?)
- Education (more?)
- Gender (being female)
- Mental Instability
- History of Personal Abuse
- Dependence on Older Person (financial, emotional)

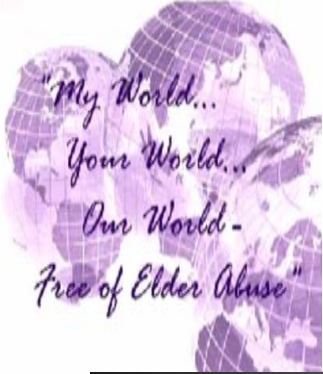


Abuse as a two-way street

- Elder may use abuse of carer to maintain control
- If a controlling or verbally abusive parent, behaviours may continue
- Crying to gain sympathy or control
- Guilt to manipulate carer
- Mutually abusive dynamic underpins

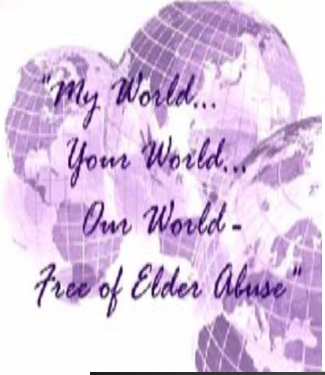


Why do relationships go wrong?



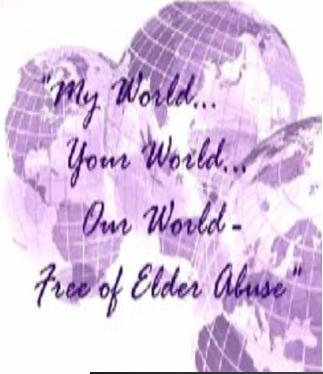
Darker side of social interactions

- Trust - ripe for exploiting
- Imbalance
 - Independence:Dependence Ratio
 - Power or status (feminist)
 - Learning or experience
- Implicit sanctioning by society
 - Ageism
 - Marginalisation



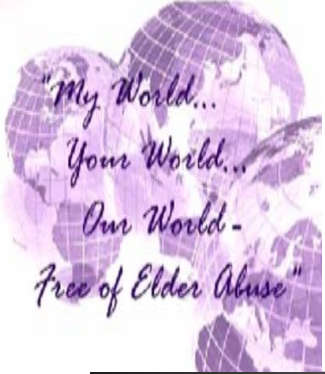
Situational Model

- Lack of Fit - dependency, stress, goals, desires, restrictions → stress → abuse
- Violence in extreme cases
- Abusive behaviours outside a trusting relationship would be considered as crimes



Elder Abuse - a Woman's Issue?

- As perpetrators:
 - more often women provide informal care
 - Societal expectations at odds with personal goals, likely to increase
- As victims:
 - particularly in developing countries or patriarchal cultures
 - Given greater life expectancy, more likely to be in abusive situations



Moving Ahead

- Psychological abuse is a behavioural phenomenon and is amenable to intervention
- Abuse encompasses actions and failure to act
- Societal expectations surrounding informal care must change in light of workforce and lifestyle changes over the past 50 years
- Systemic formal care and living arrangements must acknowledge elders' right to a quality late life
- <http://www.inpea.net/>

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