

Caregiver Stress and Elder Abuse¹

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One out of four people is a caregiver for a family member or friend (AoA). Most of these informal caregivers, as well as paid caregivers who work for agencies or on their own, are able to meet the many challenges of providing care and do an excellent job (National Center on Elder Abuse, 2002). Even so, every year, thousands of reports of elder abuse are confirmed, and unfortunately, elder abuse seems to be on the rise (National Center on Elder Abuse).

Research shows that caregiver stress plays a role in elder abuse. Not every caregiver becomes abusive, however, and researchers are still exploring what factors cause abuse. Based on what is known so far, there are some “red flags” to watch for.

Abusive caregivers fear becoming violent and have low self-esteem. They view caregiving as a burden and feel that they don't get enough support from others. The abusive caregiver feels caught in the middle between two generations, young and old, and suffers from burnout, anxiety, or depression. There may be a feeling of “old anger” toward the older person that can be traced to their past relationships.

The care recipient may also trigger reactions when she or he is aggressive, verbally abusive, or behaves in disturbing or embarrassing ways in public. Abuse is more likely to occur when the caregiver and care receiver live together and have had a poor relationship over time.

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Experts recommend that caregivers need to get help from services that will reduce the stress of providing continual care. They also should seek support of other caregivers and remember to take care of their own health.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/440.mp3

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References

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