Jean Hailes for Women's Health

MULTICULTURAL CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

# Healthy relationships as you age



You deserve to be treated with respect as you grow older. This fact sheet tells you about healthy relationships, your rights, elder abuse and where to get help if you need it.

Respect, safety, trust and open communication are important in any relationship, including those with partners, adult children, other family members, friends and carers.

**Respect** means your feelings and choices are valued, even when someone disagrees with them.

**Safety** means you feel physically and emotionally safe, without fear of being treated badly, threatened, controlled or hurt.

**Trust** means you can rely on the other person to be honest and to care about your relationship.

**Open communication** means you can talk about what you want, what you don't want and how you feel. It also means you're listened to.

## Staying connected and in control

As you age, relationships can change, sometimes because of health problems, needing more support at home or new living arrangements. These changes don't take away your right to be treated with respect.

You have the right to:

- stay connected to friends, community and cultural or faith groups, not just the people you live with
- be included in decisions about your own money, health and living arrangements, with information explained in a language you understand
- use an interpreter or get a second opinion if you're not sure about something.

## Elder abuse

Elder abuse is when someone you trust acts in a way that causes harm. It can include:

- emotional abuse, such as saying mean things to you, threatening to hurt you or stop caring for you
- financial abuse, such as pressuring you to change your Will, stealing from you or getting you to sign things you don't understand
- social abuse, such as stopping you from seeing or talking to friends and family, or from going to cultural or faith-based activities
- neglect, such as not helping with your personal care or medical needs
- physical abuse, such as hurting you on purpose or locking you in a room
- sexual abuse, such as unwanted touching or sex acts.

Elder abuse can happen in relationships with partners, adult children, other relatives, friends or carers. It is more common than many people realise and is never the older person's fault.

It can be hard to raise concerns about elder abuse, especially if you rely on the person causing harm for things like care, communication or transport. But it's important to get help if a relationship feels controlling or unsafe.

## Where to get help

If something in a relationship feels wrong, talk to someone you trust. For example:

- a close friend
- a doctor or nurse
- a multicultural community worker.

For your safety, you may want to keep this fact sheet somewhere private. And if you call a support service, consider using a phone that isn't shared.

## Support services

In an emergency, call 000.

Some of these services and websites are in English only. You can call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 to talk to a support service in your own language.

- 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) – 24-hour counselling for sexual assault, domestic and family violence, with interpreters if needed.
- 1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374) – information and advice about elder abuse in your state or territory.
- Relationships Australia 1300 364 277 – relationship support services, including counselling for families experiencing conflict.
- Dementia Support Australia 1800 699 799 – support for carers of people living with dementia.
- Safe Steps 1800 015 188 – family and domestic violence crisis support in Victoria.
- My Aged Care 1800 200 422 – information to help you access aged care services.

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**Phone 03 9453 8999**
**jeanhailes.org.au**

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This fact sheet has been developed in partnership with Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we recognise that people who identify differently may use our content.

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