

5 Signs of Elder Abuse

Approximately 3-5 % of the elderly population in the US has suffered abuse. Elder neglect, mistreatment and abuse are not easy to identify.

The New York City elder abuse center defines elder abuse as an act that causes harm or distress to an individual 60 years or older. Elders with cognitive impairment are vulnerable, both because dementia behaviors can be misunderstood and frustrating to caregiver and because elders with dementia lose the ability to defend themselves.

FIVE SIGNS of Physical Abuse:

- Bruises
- Broken Bones
- Burns
- Abrasions
- Pressure marks
- Odd explanations for injuries "Oh, she ran into a wall."

Signs of neglect

- Dirty Clothing
- Soiled diapers
- Bedsores
- Unusual weight loss
- Lack of medical aids, such as hearing aid, cane, glasses

Signs of verbal or emotional abuse

- Withdrawal and apathy
- Unusual behavior such as biting or rocking
- Nervous or fearful behavior, especially around the caregiver
- Strained or tense relationship between caregiver and elder
- Caregiver who is snapping or yelling at the elder
- Forced isolation by the family member/caregiver.

Nurses are in a position to see subtle or obvious signs of abuse. What to do if you suspect elder abuse:

- Inform the RN Case Manager or social worker.
- Document observations only such as: "observed family member display anger towards patient." Or "patient becomes withdrawn and non communicative when daughter is present."

<http://www.caring.com>

Compassion Fatigue

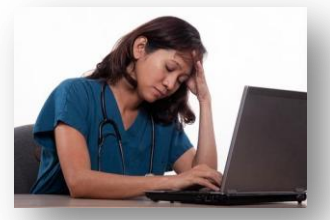


Caring too much can hurt. When caregivers focus on others without practicing self-care, destructive behaviors can surface. Apathy, isolation, bottled up emotions and substance abuse head a long list of symptoms associated with the secondary traumatic stress disorder now labeled:

Compassion Fatigue

What compassion fatigue looks like in nurses:

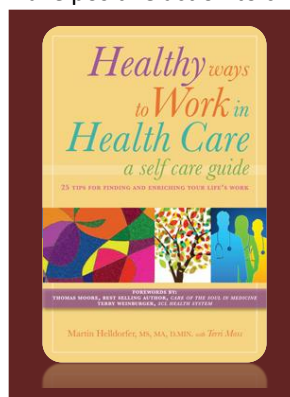
- Reduced accuracy of clinical judgment
- Difficulty concentrating
- Weight gain or loss
- Loss of strength and energy
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Loss of empathy
- Loss of spiritual awareness
- Somatization and lost days of work
- Emotional lability
- Accident proneness
- "I should have done more..." Jenkins & Warren, 2012



With support, insightful information, and authentic self-care, you can begin to understand the complexity of the emotions you've been juggling and, most likely, suppressing. Most people never take the time to understand how their jobs affect them emotionally. Consider taking a look at how your work affects you and your well being.

Authentic and Sustainable Self Care Begins With You:

- Be kind to yourself.
- Enhance your awareness with education.
- Accept where you are on your path at all times.
- Understand that those close to you may not be there when you need them most.
- Exchange information and feelings with people who can validate you.
- Listen to others who are suffering.
- Clarify your personal boundaries. What works for you; what doesn't?
- Express your needs verbally.
- Take positive action to change your environment



Resources

- Helldorfer & Moss. Healing with heart: Inspirations for Health Care Professionals
- Helldorfer & Moss. Healthy ways to work in health care: a self care guide.
- Bush & Boyle. Self-healing through reflection
- Bluni. Inspired Nurse