

Caregiver Challenges

Caregiving for a husband or partner who is or has been controlling or hurtful

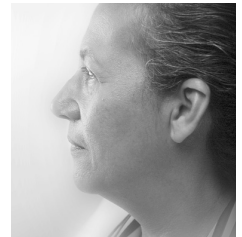
Some women find themselves caring for a husband or partner who needs assistance. When a husband or partner has been controlling or hurtful in the past, providing care can bring unique stresses and challenges. This brochure is for women who are in a caregiving role for a husband or partner who has engaged in behaviors such as isolation, emotional abuse or physical and sexual violence recently or in the past. Whether you volunteer to provide care or are unexpectedly put in this role, realize you may be harmed now or in the future and there are steps you can take to enhance your safety and find support.

Many women feel obligated and believe they have no choice but to care for their husband or partner. They may feel pressured by others to provide care. These include family members, friends, or health care professionals who may or may not have knowledge of the history of abuse. Some women volunteer to provide care thinking there will be no abuse, only to find themselves being manipulated or harmed by their husband or partner.

Anger, resentment, anxiety, and fear are common reactions for a woman in this position. If this is happening to you, it is important to take care of

Are you providing care or help to a husband or partner who:

- ◆ Controls what you do, who you see and where you go
- ◆ Calls you names
- ◆ Withholds affection
- ◆ Ridicules or denies access to religious/cultural traditions
- ◆ Destroys your property
- ◆ Hurts or threatens to hurt pet(s)
- ◆ Doesn't allow you to have your own money
- ◆ Makes all of the decisions
- ◆ Throws things
- ◆ Slaps, hits, pinches or pushes you
- ◆ Forces you to have sex



yourself, set boundaries and give yourself permission to say no to the request to provide care. There may be agencies in your community that can help you find another caregiver or provide respite and supportive care for you.



What You Can Do

If you are being hurt, you are not alone. Other women who are caregivers are hurt by their husband or partner while providing care. You may be afraid to tell anyone this is happening or question whether friends, family or professionals will believe you. There are ways to set up a support system for you that includes physical safety and emotional support. (Be aware that some of the individuals you talk to may be required to report some forms of abuse to an elder adults-at-risk agency. This report may trigger a response by that agency and could result in a referral to the criminal justice system. Therefore, before discussing personal information with a professional, ask in advance what information will be shared with others.)

You can do the following:

- ◆ Plan for your safety. Think about how you can keep yourself physically safe. Your local domestic violence program can help you with this.
- ◆ Stay involved with friends, family and others who are trustworthy to talk to about your feelings.

- ◆ Contact a domestic violence program for information about the dynamics of abuse and to learn about other local services.
- ◆ Contact a sexual assault program for information on sexual abuse and to learn about other local services.
- ◆ Seek guidance from your spiritual community.
- ◆ Talk to health care professionals or staff from other helping agencies for support and community options.
- ◆ Consider joining a support group (e.g., caregiver, Alzheimer's, domestic abuse or sexual assault, etc.). These groups provide a safe place to share personal experiences and feelings with others who are in similar circumstances.
- ◆ Stay active in the community.
- ◆ Call 911 or law enforcement if you are being physically hurt or are afraid.

Available Services

Every county and tribe has an aging unit or aging and disability resource center that provides information and assistance to older adults and their families by determining their needs and connecting



them with specific services. This includes caregiver support groups and information on the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

Contact the Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources at (608) 266-2536 or via the web at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/information.htm> if you need help contacting your local aging unit or aging and disability resource center.

Some services that you may find helpful:

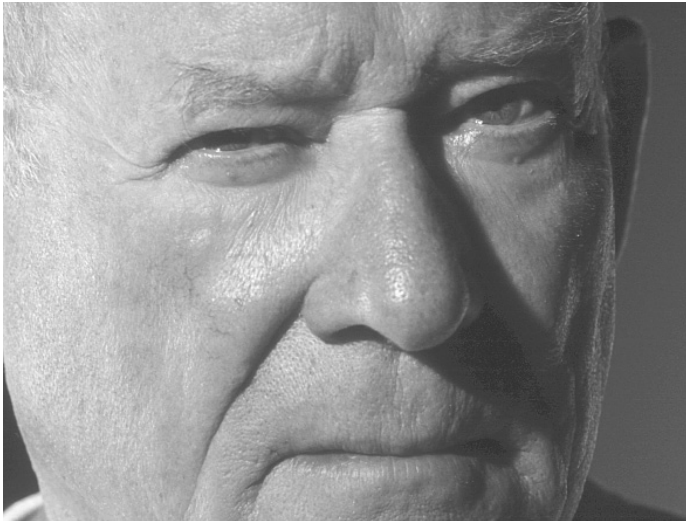
- ◆ For help with safety planning, counseling, support groups, and legal advocacy, contact a local domestic abuse or sexual assault program. Most programs provide a 24-hour help line that can be called anonymously. An advocate will listen to your concerns, provide emotional support and discuss options that are available. Most services are provided at no cost.

For information about the program in a specific area, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) Voice, or (800) 787-3224 TTY or contact the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network at (800) 656-HOPE.

- ◆ If you are concerned for your safety, there may be a telephone reassurance program in your area that can provide regular contact and safety

checks by trained volunteers. Contact your local county/tribal aging unit or aging and disability resource center for information.

- ◆ Consider meeting and socializing with others through a local senior center. Senior centers offer a variety of recreational and educational programs, seminars, events and activities for the active and less active older adult. A senior dining site can provide the opportunity for persons sixty and over to enjoy a meal and socialize with other seniors in the community.
- ◆ If you are sixty years of age or older and are having a problem in securing a public or private benefit, contact the benefit specialist at your county/tribal aging unit or aging and disability resource center. Benefit specialists are experts at helping older persons with the extensive and complicated paperwork that is often required in benefit programs. They help elders figure out what benefits they are entitled to and assist in obtaining them.
- ◆ If you are a reluctant care provider but feel that you need to stay, home health services may be able to help you. A home health aide can help with changing dressings, checking vital signs, cleaning catheters, providing tube feedings and other health specific tasks.



- ◆ If you feel you need a break, respite care may be available that will give you time to rest. Adult day centers can offer social, recreational and health-related services to individuals who cannot be left alone during the day because of health care needs, dementia or a disability.
- ◆ If you have no private transportation, there are programs that provide door-to-door rides for older individuals or people with disabilities who cannot use public transit.

Remember, if someone is harming, exploiting or trying to control you, abuse is never your fault. You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Information, support and services are available—often free of charge. You deserve a peaceful life.

For more information:

Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources at (608) 266-2536

Website:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging/information.htm>

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (608) 255-0539 voice or (608) 255-3560 TTY

Website: www.wcadv.org

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault at (608) 257-1516 voice/TTY

Website: www.wcasa.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or

(800) 787-3224 TTY

Website: www.ndvh.org

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network at (800) 656-HOPE

Website: www.rainn.org

National Center on Elder Abuse at (202) 898-2586

Website: www.elderabusecenter.org

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life at (608) 255-0539

Website: www.ncall.us

Not everyone can be a caregiver—it is okay to recognize your limitations and say no.

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