The Power and Control Wheel for Older People

Identified below are common tactics used by abusers. At the hub of the wheel is the intention of all the tactics: to establish power and control. Each spoke of the wheel describes a tactic. The rim of the wheel, which gives it strength and holds it together, is fear and physical abuse, or the threat of it. (Adapted from the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women by the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)

Power

and

Control

ISOLATION

Controlling what the person does, whom he or she sees and talks to, where he or she goes, limits time with care resources and friends or family.

NEGLECT

Withholding food,
heat, care.
Understanding but failing
to follow medical or physical
therapy or safety
recommendations. Missing
medical appointments,
not reporting serious
symptoms or changes.

ABUSING DEPENDENCIES

Telling the person how lucky he or she is to have their help; using needs to make this point; creating long waits for food, toileting or other

THREATS

Making and/or carrying out threats to do things that hurt emotionally or physically. Threats to alienate neighbors, friends, children, to leave, or to institutionalize.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Put-downs, mind games, name calling, ridiculing difficulties, worries and/or fears. Frightening the person by using looks, voice, gestures, moving or hiding a cane, walker, etc.

EXPLOITATION

Taking the Social Security check, taking over accounts and bills, spending without permission, drawing up or abusing a Power of Attorney, pressuring for transfer of property.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Being rough with intimate body parts, forcing sex against wishes, taking advantage of physical or mental illness to engage in sex.

USING FAMILY

Magnifying disagreements, past injuries, playing favorites.
Misleading members about extent and nature of illness/condition. Excluding or denying access to family members. Using power to ensure secrecy about the abuse; creating alliances against change or support.