

National Ageing Research Institute

FINANCIAL ABUSE

#OKorNotOK

Film plot overview:

Agnes is a 78 year-old woman of Greek background and has been diagnosed with early stage dementia. Over the past few weeks she has been unusually distressed; this is picked up by Emily, a home care case worker who visits from the council. Agnes reveals that her daughter, Lucy, has told Agnes that she must sell her house because she can no longer afford the mortgage. When Emily speaks with Agnes it becomes clear that Lucy has lost her job, and it is revealed that she also has a gambling problem. Arriving home while Emily is still in the house, Lucy assures her that everything is “fine”, but Agnes has not been provided with the new hearing aids that she needs.

Follow the link below to view the film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watchv=u63H7dbKRUC&feature=youtu.be>

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Sometimes families find themselves in difficult circumstances, and it's hard to know what's okay and what's not okay. Financial abuse is one form of elder abuse, and may or may not be easy to recognise. Financial abuse involves the illegal or improper use of a person's finances.

If you suspect financial abuse:

1. Talk to your supervisor

- Be sure to take notes of any concerns you have, so you can be accurate.

2. Have a conversation with the person who you suspect is a victim of financial abuse

- Remember the person with dementia has rights and is often still capable of making their own decisions
- This conversation should take place with the person on their own and in a place where they feel safe to talk
- For example, the home may not be the safest place if they live with the person you suspect is financially abusive, or if that person is caring for them in their home
- It is also wise for the person impacted to get independent financial and legal advice before making any decisions.

3. Refer the victim for financial counselling

- This could be through Centrelink, My Aged Care or a community financial counsellor
- Be sure the person has all of the information they need to make an informed decision. This includes laws and rules about gifting assets that may impact both parties' financial situations
- It is important that both parties seek separate and independent legal advice.

4. Refer to legal advice

- The victim may also wish to discuss enduring power of attorney with a legal professional to make sure their financial and legal rights are protected in the future
- There are services that provide free legal advice.
- Financial abuse often occurs alongside psychological abuse, with the older person denied the opportunity to make choices and decisions
- This type of conflict can have an impact on the whole family.

5. Refer for mediation and counselling

- Be sure to ask the victim if they would like to talk to someone about their concerns, as well as understanding what their options are
- Sometimes issues can be resolved within the family, especially if everyone knows their rights. In other situations, family relationships do break down.

If you need more information or would like to speak to someone about someone you care for, please call the Elder Abuse Hotline: 1800 Elder Help (1800 353 374).

This number will direct you to the relevant service in your state