



# Dealing With Elderly Anger



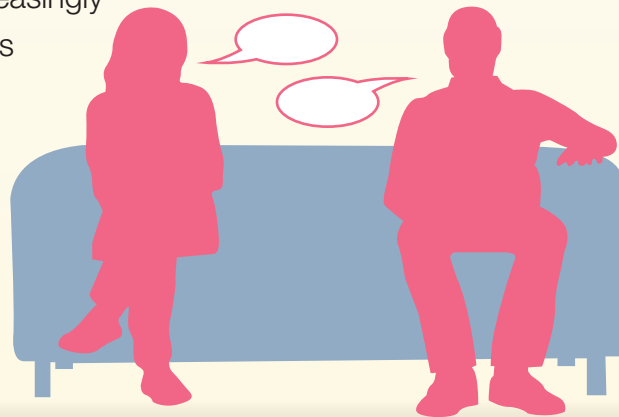
Every experienced caregiver knows that older adults have their good days and bad days. Mood swings resulting from dissatisfaction, poor health, stress, pain, and a perceived loss of dignity can easily lead your loved one to lash out against you and others that they care about. Conditions like Alzheimer's or dementia, or even medication side effects, can make it even worse. Being a caregiver under these conditions can be particularly stressful for the sandwich generation, those who are "sandwiched" between living with an elderly parent and caring for their own children.

While dealing with these feelings and the emotional strain they cause can require a considerable amount of patience and empathy, there's much more you can do than simply hope for more good days than bad ones. Below you'll find a few simple steps to help those you look after to be less cranky, and help preserve your own wellbeing as a caregiver in the process.

## *How to Handle Anger*

The most important aspect of dealing with anger in older adults is not taking negative emotions and their associated behavior personally. Pain and disease can cause us to act in very inappropriate ways, and it's important to take any opportunity you can get for a break from your caregiving duties. In the long term, try spreading caregiving amongst as many friends and family members as you can to ensure you get adequate down time.

The best solution to dealing with difficult elderly parents is almost always communication. Unfortunately, parents are generally uneasy talking with their children about fears of the future, finances, and their mortality. If your loved one seems increasingly frustrated, anxious, or otherwise emotionally disturbed, it's your responsibility to find out why if you want to help fix the problem. The next time both of you are in a pleasant mood, try warming them up to the conversation, and be ready to try several times before you're successful.



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## *Cursing and Abusive Language*

Verbal abuse and harsh language can be an even more complicated story, particularly when illnesses and children are involved. Profanities that are out-of-character are often the result of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, which can make older adults particularly difficult to cope with.

While there's no cure for these conditions, many people find that using conversational distraction helps mitigate the problem of excessive swearing. For example, you may attempt to divert your loved one's attention by bringing up happier times to encourage them to reminisce.



## *Paranoia and Hallucinations*

If your loved one accuses you or your family members of wanting to harm them, they may be suffering from paranoia, hallucinations, or another serious mental disorder. You may need to talk to your loved one's doctor and determine if medications could be the cause and need to be altered. Usually,



paranoid behavior is the result of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. In these cases, the Alzheimer's Association of America suggests using a relaxing activity like massage, music, or exercise to soothe your loved one. Later, try to identify what seemed to trigger the behavior so you can avoid it in future.

## *Physical and Emotional Abuse*

As with emotional problems, your first line of defense in dealing with angry elderly parents who are prone to physical abuse is to open the lines of communication. Try engaging in a heart-to-heart conversation about how their abusive behavior makes you feel. If this fails, it may be because the older adult is unaware that their behavior is abusive. In that case, some professionals suggest you attempt to cease providing care for your loved one for a short time to help them appreciate the value of your assistance.

If the abuse continues, you may need to consider consulting professional help, including family counselors, authorities, or even professional caregivers to help alleviate your workload. Although dealing with anger from the ones you love can be difficult, with communication and persistence you can achieve a much greater stress-free and healthy environment for your entire family.

