

# Pathways to awareness and prevention of elder abuse

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Ashland County Elder Abuse and Caregiver Support Resource Initiative, Project RESOURCE, underscores pathways to elder abuse awareness and prevention. RESOURCE components include: R = Resiliency, E = Empowerment, S = Support, O = Organization, U = Understanding, R = Respect, C = Coping and E = Education.

With funding from the Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation and co-sponsorship by Ashland County Older Adult Behavioral Health Coalition, Mental Health and Recovery Board of Ashland County will donate books to Ashland Public Library, Loudonville Public Library, Ashland County Council on Aging and/or Salvation Army Kroc Center. These resources will be available to patrons in June, Ashland County Elder Empowerment Month. The MHRB website ([www.ashlandmhrb.org](http://www.ashlandmhrb.org)) will post resources May 1. In addition, Ashland University has several noteworthy books that address issues relevant to this initiative, and are accessible to community members and/or AU students, faculty and staff.

Resources promote awareness of caregiving issues and of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, emphasizing prevention. Resources are targeted for seniors, caregivers, family members, clinicians, academics and the general public.

Caregivers and seniors are encouraged to consider the following recommendations for all Project RESOURCE components, such as promoting resilience and coping skills for caregivers, and empowering seniors. Notably, these soon-to-be-available resources provide the tools for acting on these suggestions.

The following tips have been compiled using many resources. However, one manual was particularly drawn upon and is highly recommended: *How to be a resilient caregiver: Ideas, information and resources for healthy caregiving, 2014* (available online at [www.caregiverconsortium.org](http://www.caregiverconsortium.org)).

R = Resiliency of Caregivers

Maintain relationships, stay connected with others.

Ask for help from outside agencies, family members, friends, neighbors and others.

Maintain hope and personal wellbeing.

Be kind to yourself, and give yourself a break.

Set limits and protective boundaries.

Celebrate your accomplishments and be proud of your efforts -- you do not have an easy job or one that is readily acknowledged or appreciated.

Attend to need for support, develop and improve coping skills, and optimize organizational tasks (see below).

E = Empower Seniors

Develop mutually respectful and strong intergenerational relationships.

Educate about setting boundaries, being proactive and how to advocate for selves and other seniors.

Promote development of resilience.

Educate about legal and financial options to avoid financial exploitation, to preserve rights of seniors and to ensure that elders' wishes are followed.

Promote assertiveness training.

Use approaches such as mediation to resolve family conflicts, to ensure elders' quality of life and to promote respect for seniors.

S = Support Caregivers

Find strength and understanding by talking to other caregivers in support groups.

Call on others to spend time with your elderly parents.

Draw on outside agencies for assistance.

Become more informed about how to deal effectively with behavioral problems and caregiver stress.

If needed, consider other caregiving plans (who will be the primary caregiver, who will directly provide care) and living arrangements.

Work with a counselor or therapist who may provide trauma-informed care.

O = Organization

Organize financial, medical, legal and personal documents to simplify caregiving tasks and responsibilities, and to minimize undue stress.

Organize all documents for ease of use by seniors, family members and caregivers.

Find a simple, organized way for managing dissemination of medications, ordering refills or new prescriptions and monitoring use and associated side effects.

Delineate questions to maximize the quality of your visits with physicians.

U = Understanding

Gain understanding of the changes associated with normal aging.

Gain understanding of the changes associated with dementia and/or mental illness among care-recipients, and the behavioral problems that may emerge.

Gain understanding of what is needed to prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Empathize with elderly care recipients as well as with those who struggle to provide quality of care on a daily basis.

Gain understanding about the stressors associated with caregiving, and caregivers' needs for respite and support.

R = Respect for Seniors

Communicate directly with seniors.

Avoid negative stereotypes such as confused, senile and helpless.

Promote positive views of the elderly.

Display respect by developing and strengthening intergenerational relationships and activities.

Spend time with elders -- allow them to share their life histories and memories.

Stop ageism.

C = Coping

Start with the basics: eat well, sleep well and exercise.

Be realistic about how much you are able to do.

Celebrate and find joy in special moments that arise during caregiving encounters.

Give yourself a break -- go to a movie, go shopping, eat out, call a friend, read, take a bubble bath, etc.

Share your thoughts and feelings about caregiving in support groups, in conversations with trusted friends and in a journal

Creatively express your experiences in writing or in other forms of art.

Request help from others, realize that you don't have to do everything.

Attend to your own physical and mental health needs.

Use meditation, mindfulness and other relaxation techniques to reduce stress

E = Education

Learn about different types of elder abuse.

Learn about indicators of financial exploitation, physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse and neglect.

Learn about risk factors for engaging in abusive behaviors and for being abused.

Learn about strategies and resources for helping victims as well as for those who are at risk of becoming abusive to care-recipients.

Learn about how caregivers can become more resilient, more adept at coping, and more informed about how to deal with problematic behaviors such as aggressiveness.

Know where and who to call when elder abuse is suspected. Call Adult Protective Services at 419-282-5001.

For more information about Project RESOURCE, contact David Ross, associate director, or Hillary Wertman, special projects coordinator, MHRB (419-281-3139).

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