

Scenario Overviews

1. The Family Table

Father – Paul Soles

Son – David Gale

Daughter looking at bills – Diane Flacks

Daughter at end of table – Gail Kerble

Friend – Robert Levine



Is there abuse happening? If so, what kind?

- Emotional abuse – making plans to sell Paul's house without his involvement or regard for his wishes / rights violations in going through his personal papers

What is the abusive behaviour?

- Controlling behaviour
 - Not allowing Paul to make decisions and choices
- Treating him like a child / the sibling's behaviour could be described as infantilization / paternalism. The only time they pay attention is when he knocks over the purse, which is an over-reaction to a small incident.

What are the risk factors?

- Loss of Paul's autonomy increases his vulnerability

What are the ageist attitudes that are implicit in this scene?

- Expectation re the burden of having an aging parent, of having to care for him
- No sense that his family sees that Paul makes a contribution to the relationships
- The ageist attitudes justify the behaviour – the siblings would not see themselves as behaving abusively

Who has the power? What are the dynamics in the relationship that tilt it toward abuse?

- The adult children are aligned and overpowering their dad
- It is unlikely they would see their behaviour as abusive, ageist

- They are ‘problem-solving’ and have set clear goals – sell the house, find a retirement home, place him there
- Paul’s feelings are unimportant in the face of the task at hand

What is the harm?

- Paul’s wishes are not known or sought – he doesn’t matter in the decision-making
- The message to him is that he is ‘a problem’ – is hurtful, disrespectful, destructive to the relationship
- He is going to be forced into a living situation he may not want or be ready for
- The shift from being a valued member of society to a being a burden will take a personal toll

If you are Paul’s friend, how might you support him?

- See the struggle he is experiencing
- Validate his desire to keep the house
- Understand that these are his children and that any indictment of their behaviour may seem like a betrayal
- Ask how you can help
- Let him know you are available to listen



Scenario Responses

- The non-supportive response is more about Robert’s anger than Paul’s experience of the loss of his rights. Robert will increase the Paul’s sense of isolation through the judgment about the kids and the challenge that he needs to stand up to them.
- In the supportive response, Robert does not criticize the siblings, he gives them the benefit of the doubt and then names Paul’s mental capacity as a strength.
- Possible discussion – what are the differences for men and women as they become less independent?

Notes:

2. Moving In

Mother – Maria Vaccratsis

Son – Carlos Diaz

Carlos' daughter – Amerah Atiyeh

Friend – Jocelyn Zucco



Is there abuse happening? If so, what kind?

- Financial abuse. Using mothers bank card without her knowledge for his expenses – this is a crime. He has no legal authority to access her money, use her bank card, open her mail for purpose of seeking funds.
- Emotional abuse. Moving her without asking.
- Violation of Rights – opening her mail, moving her things downstairs

What is the abusive behaviour?

- Controlling behaviour
 - Disregard for the fact that it is Maria's house - not allowing Maria to freely make decisions and choices, imposing his preferences
 - Moving her downstairs
 - Disregard for her privacy
 - Reading her mail
- A strong sense of entitlement
- Treating Maria like a child – “mom – what are you doing?!”

What are the risk factors?

- Carlos is dependent upon Maria and he is unemployed
- They are living together
- He suffers from depression
- Alcohol abuse increases risk
- This is an escalating situation

What are the ageist attitudes that are implicit in this scene?

- Sense of entitlement on the part of the son and granddaughter – Maria is there to serve them / her assets are free to him
- Tension between treating Maria like a child – moving her things without asking, ignoring her concerns and Carlos behaving like a dependent child
- Carlos would likely not see himself as breaking the law, behaving abusively
- Ageism and sexism are both present - sexism in the sense that women have less rights and are assumed to 'serve' the family

- Amerah (granddaughter) also assumes that Maria is there to serve the family

Who has the power? What are the dynamics in the relationship that tilt it toward abuse?

- Carlos has the power – he assumes his mother will ‘mother’ him in his time of need – he demands that – Maria’s feelings don’t matter
- He assumes that he can just use his mother’s assets without asking – he feels entitled
- Maria’s concern for Carlos erodes her power in the relationship because Carlos takes advantage of it
- Ageist assumptions that make Maria’s rights and wishes less important than those of Carlos

What is the harm?

- Carlos is breaking the law by taking his mother’s money, using her bankcard
- He is using up her resources
- He is modeling disrespect to his daughter
- He is undermining his relationship with his mother by treating her without regard for her wants and wishes as a person with equality

If you are Maria’s friend, how might you support her?

- Recognize that she is concerned about her son
- Acknowledge the rapid changes that are taking place and ask how she feels about them
- Validate her rights
- Ask how you can help



Scenario Response

- In the non-supportive response, Jocelyn is understandably outraged by the situation but she is pushing Maria to take action in a way that shuts her down and blames her for the situation. This is victim-blaming. Maria will likely feel the need to defend her son.
- In the supportive response Jocelyn allows her concern to lead the conversation without taking control about what needs to happen. She names the changing situation and expresses real concern. The choice about whether to talk about the situation is left to Maria.
- Potential discussion – use of bankcards / financial abuse – protective factors

Notes:

3. Professor

Professor – Art Hindle

Beth – Victoria Snow



Is there abuse happening? If so, what kind?

- Art has given Power of Attorney to his son – the problem with the property taxes may be a warning sign
- Art reveals that his son appears to be living a lavish life while he is wearing a coat that is too small, stained, ripped and not appropriate for winter, so it could be warning signs of financial abuse and neglect

What is the abusive behaviour?

- In this scene, we have only the Art's account of what is happening. It does raise concerns about financial abuse and possibly neglect as the professor's physical and emotional needs may not be being addressed
- His family does not visit him – this could be a form of emotional abuse because it conveys the idea that he has no value

What are the risk factors?

- Isolation – we don't know the Art's support system, Beth may be his only friend
- Unpaid property taxes even though Art indicates he has the means to pay them

What are the ageist attitudes that are explicit and implicit in this scene?

- He is not important to his family, possibly viewed as a burden
- He may not have been consulted about moving – as if his right to choice diminishes because he is older
- Possibly sexism – assuming that he can't look after himself because he is a man

What are the power dynamics in the relationship that tilt it toward abuse?

- His son has PoA and the property taxes are unpaid. That this has come as a surprise to the professor indicates that he is not being kept informed about his finances

What is the harm?

- The professor's assets may be being stolen
- Son may be violating civil rules of what it means to be a trustworthy substitute as POA and the possible stolen property may constitute a criminal offence
- If so, this is a betrayal which will erode his choices and wellbeing – raises the question about why he isn't managing his own funds

- Art says he has been “trundled off to this warren for the aged”. From the comment, one could infer that he doesn’t appear to like where he is or possibly that he didn’t want to move there
- There is no evidence that he cannot manage to live independently

If you are his friend, how might you support the professor?

- Ask Art to talk more about his changed situation and how he feels about it.
- Validate his rights and feelings
- Find information about what the PoA means for Art
- Offer to support him in following up on the unpaid taxes



Scenario Response

- In the non-supportive response, Beth jumps to the possibility or judgement that Art’s son is stealing money. Although it is an easy leap to make given the information he relays, it is still a leap that will put Art on the defensive about his son. This may further isolate him
- In the supportive response, Beth acknowledges that there boundaries between them that she wants to respect. In observing those boundaries, she acknowledges her concern but does not press him about his son. Instead offers her support in a general way.

Notes:

4. Grandson in Trouble

Grandmother – Monique Mojica

Grandson – Gregory Odjig

Friend – Jani Lauzon



Is there abuse happening? If so, what kind?

- Financial abuse – Gregory is looking in his grandmother’s dresser for money that he will take. He takes money from her wallet

What is the abusive behaviour?

- Financial / theft, a strong sense of entitlement to Monique’s money

What are the risk factors?

- Shared living situation
- Dependency on grandmother
- Addiction issues
- Cultural factors – increased risk and vulnerability because of the legacy of colonialism and residential schools.

What are the ageist attitudes that are explicit and implicit in this scene?

- Gregory’s addictive behaviour may be more in play than ageism.

Cultural Factors

- Aboriginal peoples are traditionally collectivist in a system of clans.
- Colonialization and residential schools have had devastating intergenerational impacts
- A group of grandmothers in Yellowknife spoke about the difficulty they have to say “no” to grandchildren who face systemic discrimination in the broader society and whose parents similarly struggle with addictions and violence in the aftermath of the legacy of colonialism. This was only one group’s experience and shouldn’t be generalized but it does surface culturally specific risk factors

What are the power dynamics in the relationship that tilt it toward abuse?

- Monique’s concern makes her reluctant to hold Gregory to account
- Gregory is an addict. His behaviour is driven by his need for drugs – this does not excuse the behaviour but it does acknowledge that he will use whatever means are necessary to finance his addiction.

What is the harm?

- Monique is worried about Gregory but unable to affect what is happening – this will hurt their relationship
- She really wants to believe him when he says he is no longer using, if he is lying it will hurt her and the relationship
- Gregory is an addict in trouble

If you are her friend, how might you support Monique?

- Recognize that she is deeply concerned about her grandson
- Understand that she may feel like she is powerless to say 'no' to him – afraid he might cut off contact or do more dangerous things to get drugs
- It's hard to say no to a child or youth who faces so many life challenges.



Scenario Response

- In the non-supportive response, Jani is understandably upset that Gregory has taken Monique's money again but lashing out at Monique in the way that she does closes the possibility that Monique might talk with her. This is likely to increase Monique's guilt, fear and isolation.
- In the supportive response, Jani acknowledges the complexity by stating that she also doesn't 'know' what to do. She names Monique's concern and then raises her own. This opens the door for Monique.

Notes:

5. The Doctor's Office

Daughter - Victoria Snow
Mother - Anne Anglin
Doctor - David Gale
Nurse - Nicole St. Martin



Situation – This could be the same family as the earlier Domestic Violence scenario. It is not an abuse situation but rather a look into dynamics that begin to happen when there is a health change (such as a diagnosis of dementia) and family members begin to play different roles. Victoria and Anne have lived quite separately and the reality that Victoria is being looked to in administering the medicine is an assumption on the part of the Dr.

What are the ageist attitudes that are explicit and implicit in this scene?

- The Doctor doesn't speak to Anne but talks about her situation as if she isn't present
- He is paternalistic and patronizing when he does speak to her – calls her “dear”
- He speaks loudly to Anne where there isn't evidence of her being hard of hearing
- The doctor and nurse assume that Victoria will move into a caregiving role without any discussion – they behave as if having a dementia diagnosis negates Anne's rights to choose or to be included in decisions
- Anne's situation is being highly medicalized with a focus on pill taking as the solution to her concerns.
- The medicalization of her condition seems associated with the rushing, briskness and impersonal approach

Scenario Responses

- In the first response, the nurse objects to Victoria's sarcastic comment that her interaction with the Dr. wasn't helpful.
- In the second response, the nurse acknowledges the changing situation and tries to be helpful with concrete suggestions.

Possible Discussions:

- The assumption of what a diagnosis of dementia means to individuals – it seems like a dire pronouncement with little hope for any kind of quality of life
- The assumption that Victoria will shift toward caregiving. Their relationship has not been close and Victoria does not seem prepared to take on this type of responsibility
- What are the strategies to retain good quality of life for both Victoria and Anne?
- Are we open to alternative understandings of dementia and quality of life? See slide that



references Denmark and Sweden

6. Alone at Mom's

Daughter - Victoria Snow

Mother - Anne Anglin



Situation – Following from the previous scenario, one year later, Anne's health is more compromised. She was recently hospitalized with undiagnosed symptoms that wouldn't allow her to eat, but was released because she was deemed well enough to go home. Victoria was asked to take her mother home because she was "blocking a bed" for a patient with a more serious issue. Anne is not well but there is not a clear issue. She is increasingly absent mentally, and she is still having trouble eating, and so Victoria doesn't feel like she can leave her alone. Victoria has a full-time job and a household of her own. She is unprepared for the situation and fears that her mother will never recover her ability to live independently. She is feeling under siege by other family members and professionals who are critical of her efforts and even making allegations that Victoria may be neglecting her mother's care and acting improperly with respect to her mother's money.

What are the ageist attitudes that are explicit and implicit in this scene?

- In addition to the ageist assumptions noted in the last scene, there may also be sexist assumptions and expectations that assign Victoria the role of primary caregiver because she is a woman

Scenario Response

- The friend listens and acknowledges the tough situation. She recognizes that Victoria is overwhelmed and so makes a concrete suggestion about how to help by gathering other concerned friends and families and to find out what resources are available to support Victoria. She doesn't impose the idea; she checks to be sure the Victoria thinks it is helpful.

Possible Discussions:

- How do we ensure that when family and friends become caregivers – that they have the necessary skills and support that will be meaningful?
- Do we set people up to be abusive?
- How do we challenge ageist assumptions that the increasing dependence of an older adult means the relationship is no longer mutual? How can we emphasize the mutuality of all relationships?

Notes: