

What to do in the event of bullying?

Have you noticed that Denise, your next-door neighbour, is sometimes being threatened by the upstairs neighbour's son? That he bangs on her door to scare her, and openly wrecks her flowers?

Do you often witness a small group of seniors spreading humiliating rumours about Claude, and insulting him in the dining room of your residence? Or even the resident who goes as far as hitting him with a cane when staff is not around?



Bullying is a phenomenon that can occur at any age. This behaviour is intended to scare, hurt, humiliate, socially exclude, or harm the targeted individual. It occurs when there is a power or control struggle between the people involved. Bullying is different from a conflict between two people, or a joke between friends.

What to do in the event of harassment?

- If you are in an abusive situation, do not remain alone! Don't hesitate to bring it up with people you trust.
- Consider your emotional and physical safety. It is important to come up with a safety plan, and protective measures that could help you in case of an emergency.
- If you are in a public environment, speak to someone in charge who will be able to support you and put an end to the situation.

If you witness a harassment situation

- Do not turn a blind eye. It is important to identify harassment when it occurs.
- Be there for the elderly individual. Support them – without making decisions for them – by allowing them to talk about what they are going through, and by informing them of existing resources.
- It is better not to intervene. Respond with respect and positive treatment, to reinforce the feeling of safety and social support.

Mistreatment is different from intimidation, because the former always occurs in a trusting relationship, and may be unintentional. Intimidation, however, often occurs in situations of mistreatment, as a means of controlling, or causing harm, to a senior citizen.

If you are the target of a harassment situation, or witness to one, call the Elder Abuse Help Line for a listening ear, information, support, or referrals.

Elder Abuse Help Line 1-888-489-ABUS (2287)

If a criminal act has been committed, call the police (911).

Sources :

Beaulieu, M., Bédard, M.-E. et Leboeuf, R. (2016). « L'intimidation envers les personnes âgées : un problème social connexe à la maltraitance? ». Service social, 61(2), 38-56.

Éducaloi.qc.ca – Bullying: Recognizing It and Acting [Web].

<https://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/bullying#un>

Government of Quebec. (2015). Plan d'action concerté pour prévenir et contrer l'intimidation 2015-2018.