

Elderly can plan to stop mental, financial abuses

Dear Jo,

After reading your column on elderly abuse some weeks ago, the question I have is, what steps can we (the elders) take to prevent this tragic situation?

Mrs. D.M.
Hamilton Reader

Dear Mrs. M.

The problem of elderly abuse is extremely complex because the abuse is not primarily physical but can be psychological and financial, and involve neglect.

Therefore in order to avoid being a victim, an older person has to actively consider the potentiality of the problem and take definite steps to prevent abuse.

To best answer your question, I will quote from a recently published book on elderly abuse, "Elder Abuse and Neglect," Springer, 1986, by Mary Jay Quinn and Susan K. Tomin. When addressing prevention, they suggest:

"PLAN FOR the possibility of disability by seeking out an attorney, possibly one that specializes in pro-

bate law, who can advise you about powers of attorney, guardianships or conservatorships, natural death acts, and living wills."

"Consider nominating co-conservators or co-guardians so more than one person knows your affairs and can take action if something goes amiss in the administration of your assets or personal care."

"Make a will and review it annually, but do not revise it lightly."

"Be wary about deeding your house or willing your house or other assets to anyone who promises to 'keep you out of a nursing home' or take care of you 'at home' if you become disabled."

"BE CAREFUL, when asked to sign anything. Go the extra step and have someone you trust review the document."

"Be sure that you are thoroughly familiar with your financial status and know how to handle your assets. This is particularly important for older women who are especially vulnerable to abuse."

"Arrange for direct deposit of pen-

sion checks or any other regular payments."

"Do not rely solely on family for your social life or for care if you have health problems. Continually cultivate friends of all ages so there are always people around who are concerned about you."

"IF AN ADULT child, particularly one who has led a troubled life, wants to return home to live with you, think it over carefully. Be especially careful if your family has a history of violent behavior or drug/alcohol abuse. Instead, consider supporting the child in his or her own apartment."

"If there has been alienation from family or friends, make peace to the extent possible — not only because it is a healing thing to do, but because it creates a climate of concern for you."

Mrs. M., I hope these suggestions will be helpful to you and other readers who are interested in preventing difficult situations that can lead to abuse. Thank you for your letter.

gerontology



A. Jolayne
Farrell

Recycling can save resources, money

Q.I take my recyclable materials to the Birmingham Recycling Center. But can large-scale recycling really save money?

A. Despite the current lack of markets for recycled goods, one report compiled in Seattle says "yes."

Seattle's solid waste utility project manager devised what is believed to be the first formula for calculating the actual money saved by recycling the household waste stream.

Her formula showed disposal savings by avoiding or reducing costs in these areas: disposal, transportation, environmental and resource depletion.

At present, Seattle recycles 22 percent or 162,000 tons of its commercial residential waste stream. At \$6.50 per ton, Seattle's savings in disposal costs were \$1 million last year.

Transportation cost savings (by not transporting it to the landfill), at \$7.72 per ton, were \$1.25 million.

Besides these primary operating costs, the environmental cost savings must be figured, both present and future. Landfills must be checked and maintained for 20 to 30 years after they are closed, so future



consumer mailbag

Terry Gibb

liability costs from accidents should be figured into the cost analysis of disposal.

Another environmental cost is that of the unrecovered resources. The Seattle report estimates the cost per ton of the recycled materials at \$20.34, or about \$3.25 million per year. Unknown environmental costs include the development of future sources of raw materials to replace the materials not recycled.

Finally, there's the "heirloom" cost. This refers to the inability to use the land of a closed landfill site for any purpose for 20 to 30 years or more into the future.

A RECENT survey by the Michigan DNR estimates that disposal fees average \$13.15 per ton of solid waste and the overall cost per ton of landfilling when all of the above four elements are figured amounts to at

least \$50 per ton.

Michigan accumulates 9.7 million tons of solid waste annually, and 85 percent is currently dumped in landfills.

This Seattle study clearly shows the benefits of recycling programs, both financially and environmentally. The only criticism of the study was that the figures are too low.

Supporting recycling efforts on an individual and communitywide level appears to be one way to curb rising cost for everyone.

ECO-TIP: For a free recycling packet, send a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope to Concern Detroit at the address below.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, 1923 Shelby, Detroit 48226.

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