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What Elders Can Do to Protect Themselves From Elder Abuse

Build and maintain relationships with a circle of friends and family members. Isolation can make one vulnerable.

Stay active and busy. This encourages one's ability to remain highly functioning.

Build a “buddy network” with other elders.
Call and visit each other frequently to know what is going on in each others' lives.

If you are in a situation of purchasing a costly item or service and you do not completely understand the purchase agreement or do not feel comfortable, do not sign or agree to anything. Have a trusted, knowledgeable person review the purchase plan with you and the seller.

Have your income checks directly deposited into your bank account. This prevents the opportunity for mail theft or theft of the check before it is deposited.

If managing your current finances is becoming difficult, have someone whom you trust most, assist you.

Get your estate matters and wishes documented by a qualified attorney. These documents may include a living will, a revocable trust, a durable power of attorney for healthcare and/or asset management.

If you are offered a “prize”, “loan”, “gift”, or “investment” that sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true.

Never sign any documents that you do not fully understand or feel comfortable about. Ask yourself if the person encouraging you to sign has an ulterior motive, and might be motivated to take advantage of you.

Solicitations: do not provide personal information (name, address, social security number, account number) unless you initiated the contact and know with whom you are speaking. BE ASSERTIVE. When you say, “NO”, end the conversation. Hang the phone up or shut the door even if the person is still talking.

Verify the credentials of anyone who says s/he is an official of an agency (police, social services, PG&E, etc.).

Tear up or shred any records with your identifying information and all credit or debit cards.

If you hire someone for personal, in home care, or repair services ensure that s/he has had a proper background check, including checking with any licensing or credentialing agencies (such as the CA State Dept. Of Consumer Affairs).