

John, aged care resident: I've seen war, bushfires, floods

Bethany, living in the community: My husband wasn't always kind to me. He hit me and yelled at me.

Giuseppe, aged care resident: Bad things happened to me when I was a child

Thora, aged care resident: When I fell in love with a woman, my family threw me out on the street.

A/Prof Leanne Humphreys, Director training and workforce development: Most older Australians will have experienced at least one trauma in their lifetime.

This means that somebody you love or care for is likely to have experienced trauma.

Lots of different kinds of events can be experienced as traumatic

And for older Australians, moving into aged care can also be traumatic, and lead to feelings of loss and grief

While many people will recover, for some the effects will be long lasting and result in mental health problems.

These problems may include anxiety, anger, depression, substance use, or posttraumatic stress disorder.

One of the most important things you can do is ask yourself "what's happened to this person?' Why might they be thinking, feeling or acting this way?

Reminding yourself that this person may have experienced trauma helps you understand their needs.

Behaviours that appear challenging like being irritable or staying away from people and not communicating may be the person's best attempt to cope with distress or reminders of trauma.

There are also practical things you can do to help.

Listen to their story but don't force them to talk. If a person feels safe and comfortable with you, sharing their story can help them feel understood and make sense of what happened to them.

Stay in touch. Even if you can't visit regularly, call them or keep in contact in other ways.

Encourage them to make friends. Suggest that they join a group or go on an organised outing.

Help them keep to a routine and do things they enjoy

Point out their strengths and what they have achieved in the past

And most importantly, explain that they are not a burden.

They don't need to feel guilty about asking for help.

By doing small things you can improve the quality of life of people who have experienced trauma, or who might be feeling sadness, loss and grief.