

Fear of Retaliation
Video Script - Cathleen

Background Only

Cathleen is a 70-something woman who has had rheumatoid arthritis since age 21. She is also experiencing vision loss. After a recent surgery, Cathleen and her family decided that she couldn't live alone any more. After much research, they decided on a nursing home that had come highly recommended to them.

C=Cathleen

IM=Interviewer Mike

IM: Good morning, Cathleen. Thank you for agreeing to our interview.

C: You're welcome.

IM: How long have you lived here?

C: About...well, let's see. I guess it's been almost 2 years now.

IM: How do you feel about your living arrangement?

C: I guess I'm used to it now. I got started off on the wrong foot, so it took some adjusting.

IM: Can you talk about that time?

C: My first day here...my daughter brought me straight from the hospital...it was late in the day. They took me to my room and there was a bed that wasn't made up or anything. I was so tired and thirsty. I just had to sit in a chair for quite a while until they got my bed ready and then they finally brought me some water too.

My roommate didn't say a word or look my way and the staff didn't really talk to me much either since they were busy working. I didn't feel very welcome. In fact, I felt like a bother.

It was awful really. I didn't feel at all welcome in my new home. I had a tremendous feeling of loss to begin with and then my introduction to the new place was so unfriendly....I felt completely hopeless.

IM: You said you had a feeling of loss.

C: Yes, that's because you feel like you have nothing left. It's hard enough to get by with my disabilities and complications. When you have someone taking care of you who isn't kind, it just takes away all your hope.

I really don't like having people take care of me. I've always been able to rely on myself. At first, I didn't feel like I could make my own decisions or choices about anything.

IM: Can you give me an example?

C: When I first got here, they showed me the activity board in the hallway that had all the activities scheduled. One day, a CNA insisted on taking me to play bingo even though I said I didn't want to go. With my rheumatoid arthritis and vision loss, I can't see very well or handle the game pieces.

I told the head nurse about it, and she said she would talk to the CNA. Later the CNA came into my room and asked me if I had complained about her. Who wants to be put in that position? I depend on the staff here for everything!

IM: How did it turn out?

C: When I explained to the aide that I was kind of embarrassed about playing bingo when I couldn't see the cards or hold on to the game pieces, she apologized. She said she never thought of it that way. The aide's name is Nancy—she still works here and she's been really kind to me ever since.

I think that's the most important thing for staff—to have empathy, to be able to walk in our shoes. None of us wants to be here really. We'd rather be living in our own homes, surrounded by our own belongings and making our own choices.

I just ask that people treat me the same way they would like to see their own family treated, their mother or grandmother. They don't have to love me or even like me. But they should honor my dignity and support my decisions and choices. That's all I ask...that's all any of us ask really.

IM: Thank you so much for sharing your feelings with us today.

C: You're quite welcome.