

Why this brochure?



Photo author: Pixabay

POSITIVE SOLUTIONS OF OLD FACES

WHOSE STORIES ARE THERE?

During the third age, people sometimes face new challenges that they had not thought about before. If they have children, they may be focused on their families and not pay enough attention to them. This can lead to neglect - when parents do not have enough means of living and children do not help them, self-neglect and other risks. Sometimes the elderly can suffer physical, psychological or economic violence from their relatives, and many of them feel lonely. Old people rarely talk about negative experiences because they love their family members and do not want to burden them, or because they are afraid that things could get worse.

This research shows that for a peaceful and comfortable third age it is important if a person has family support (children), developed social contacts with friends, the neighborhood, financial autonomy (control over income such as a pension) and housing autonomy (ownership of the house or apartment in which he lives).

Serbia / 2022

The stories in this brochure are testimonies of old people about their lives. Some of them testify about the problems they are in, and some offer positive solutions that they have come up with themselves.

How were the experiences gathered?

The stories were collected during 2021 and 2022 among old people in Užice, Plandište and Valjevo in cooperation with local organizations. On that occasion, the method of *Positive Deviation* used, which recognizes those practices that are successful in solving a problem that those who wanted to solve the problem they were facing came up with with their inventiveness. Others who are in a similar situation can learn from them and apply a solution to help themselves and others.

I changed the lock

Violence

In violence against the elderly, one of the family members is most often involved. Due to love for children, sense of responsibility and shame, old people rarely talk about it and ask for help. If you are facing some form of violence, it is recommended that you contact the Center for Social Work or the police immediately, but you can also read the experiences of your peers who have figured out how to positively solve some situations.

"I live in a house with my son, daughter-in-law and grandson. My grandson used to come and shout around the house and take money from me. Once I got angry and changed the lock on the front door. Even though I left the door unlocked, he noticed it ever since. has changed how he behaves. The house is headed for me."

Stanislava (age 78)

Positive examples



Author of the photo: Matthias Zomer

Let someone always be there when the husband comes drunk

"The children are in Belgrade and come when they can. I am 71 years old and live with my husband who drinks a lot. He knows how to be rude when he drinks , to shout and hit me. I was ashamed for a long time, so when he came and started shouting, I just tried to hide and be silent. Then one evening he came and I had a neighbor for coffee, and he was just something muttered and went to sleep. From then on I started calling my neighbor every time, or someone to be at home with me when he goes out and I think he's going to come back drunk. And less ... he's really less violent when someone is in home"

Jelena (age 71)

Positive examples

Neglect

According to the Family Law, children are obliged to take care of their parents in their old age. If the parents do not have the basic necessities of life, they live in bad conditions, the children should come to them and help them. In our child-oriented culture, neither parents nor children often see that children are occupied exclusively with their own problems and that they do not pay enough attention to their parents and their needs. In more extreme cases, children may expect their parents to help them at the expense of their needs or even take money from them themselves. That's why, with all the love you have for children, it's good to think about maintaining control over your own life, especially over property and finances, since this is often the cause of neglect.

Looking at me, they changed

I'm in one house, they're in another....My sister-in-law was bothered by everything for a while. When I prepare breakfast, she didn't think to eat it, when I go into the garden, I'll step on her, when I sit down to eat, I'll slog and they won't look at me...For years they took my entire pension, and I don't know how many years I paid off their loans. They have two cars, they can't take me to the doctor, and I'm going for three months. While I could, I went by bus ... Once a neighbor from the village came and I told him everything, that's how it came to me. I didn't expect that he would talk further around the village. When the word spread, my son and daughter-in-law also heard. At first they were angry and scolded me, and then they got better. They started giving me my entire pension and I bought myself a wood-burning stove. We moved the old stove to Dr. next to the house and then the sister-in-law moved the kitchen there. Earlier, cooking was done at my place and we all gathered in the kitchen during the day. So I bought a stove and got my peace, but loneliness bothers me."

Mirka (age 76)

Positive examples

I was left alone

"When my husband died, I immediately left everything to my children. My son lives here above me and my daughter is in Belgrade. My son and daughter-in-law used to come to my place for a while, but they stopped because we are not on good terms. I'm alone. I move weakly and pass out. I don't have anyone and I don't have anything anymore."

Gordana (81 years old).

Although brothers are brothers, sisters-in-law are not sisters

"When I lost my husband, my children were small, but even later I thought it was better not to transfer property to my children. I have a house and an apartment in the city and my parents' house in the countryside. I have three sons, one is abroad and two are here. One lives with me in the house with his sister-in-law and children, and the other lives in an apartment with his wife and children. We get along well. My will, I left everything to them, but until I die it's on me. I have enough and I don't need anything, I help them a little, they help me a little. I pay the bills in both apartments, just so you know. But I still thought, I'd better get insurance, because you never know how old you're going to be, and if you don't have anything, you can end up on the street. Also, I didn't want to create situations where the brothers could hold grudges against each other, and me, too, because you know how it goes, even though brothers are brothers, sisters-in-law are not sisters, and each one pulls for her own children. It is very important that you have something of your own in old age. I openly discussed the subject of inheriting the property with them and told them that they would certainly inherit it after my death. I decided to take this step because I didn't want to depend on anyone throughout my life, regardless of the very good relationship I have with my sons and other family members. Unfortunately, I have heard examples of families where the elderly had problems after they "transferred" their assets to their children or close relatives. In such cases, there was neglect of the elderly or open conflicts between family members."

Milena (84 years old)

Loneliness

“The pensioners’ association brought me back from depression of the Third Age brings with it a decrease in social contacts and often a feeling of loneliness. Many have the feeling that they are alone and they contacts (with family and friends) they have they are afraid of losing. Due to retirement (or reduction of work activities) people have more free time that they don't know how to fill. In some cases, retirement homes, or some other associations are a good way to connect with your peers, feel good and be useful to someone. In other cases, going to a Home for the elderly is a better solution than being alone at home. The following experiences may be useful for you as well.



Photo author: Harun Tan

" My wife died a few years ago. After her death I withdrew into myself, I became depressed, I didn't leave the house and I was very lonely. My neighbor was a member and associations of pensioners and she often went to their get-togethers. She started convincing me to go with her too, that it would help me feel better. Every time she came to my place for coffee, she would convince me to come. I told my daughter about the association and that my neighbor was inviting me to hang out, and she supported me in that and said "Dad, go, it will be nice for you, hang out." Since my neighbor was also a widow and she gave me a nice introduction to the association, and my daughter supported me, I decided to go. That's how I became a member of the pensioners' association and now I don't miss a single gathering. We go to parties, we travel and I'm having a great time."

Milan (68 years old)

Positive examples

Home for the elderly is sometimes the best solution, especially when relatives and friends continue to visit you.

I'm Jelka and I'm 77 years old. Pensioner I am alone and live in Užice with my family members. Until recently, my brother also lived in our household. Unfortunately, he has no children or descendants of his own. Some time ago, his health deteriorated and he could hardly move. He needed medical care much more often than before. The only solution to his situation was to go to a home. He didn't want to go at first. His biggest fear was that he would be lonely and isolated there from everyone he had lived with until then. What bothered him the most was that whether family members, friends and acquaintances will visit him. The turning point and decisive moment for the decision was a long, honest and open conversation I had with him. In that conversation, I made a promise that I would regularly visit him at home in. He heard similar words from other members of our family. Our promises and our honesty were crucial for him to make a decision and go to the home. Today I visit him regularly, just as I promised. Other members of our family do the same. Every time I visit him, I see the joy and satisfaction that he decided to take such a step. In the meantime, he made numerous acquaintances and friendships. He leads an active social life that would not have been possible if he had stayed in our household. He is satisfied with the organization of everyday life in the home and all the activities he has there. His health has improved.

Positive examples

The team of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade

Dr. Dragan Stanojević
Prof. Dr. Milana Ljubičić
Dr. Božidar Filipović
Dr. Aleksandra Marković
Milica Glišić
Katarina Živković
Jelena Filipović
Ivana Đokić
Đurđevka Tarfa
Mirjana Manojlović
Vladimir Simić



The stories were collected by a team of researchers from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in cooperation with colleagues from the Centers for Social Work in Užice, Plandište and Valjevo, and the work was helped by colleagues Lars Thuesen and Mads Fly-Hansen from Denmark.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the authors of the research.

Our special thanks to the Pensioners' Associations Užice, Valjevo, Plandište, the Association of Disabled People from Plandište, the Association of Disabled People from Valjevo, Caritas from Valjevo. These organizations and truly phenomenal people are not only partners but bearers of this initiative.

*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
Čika Ljubina 18-20
11000 Belgrade*