

Supporting older carers

Tool 1: Stop, Look, Listen – Think Carer

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This tool focuses on what older carers said is important in the way that professionals relate to and support them. It can be used:

- > To support practitioners, prepare for and 'tune in' before a visit and reflect on what is important to the carer.
- > As a guide for reflective discussion in supervision.

1 Step 1: Here are some quotes from the research project to help you think about what is important to older carers when interacting with professionals.

Don't make promises
you can't keep

Everything was focused on
him [a 'cared-for person' living
with dementia]. Professionals
would say, it must be awful
for him. It was as if I walked
around in his shadow

Most professionals are
fantastic but stressed
and stretched – if
you say you are going
to call on a certain day
make sure you do



Think about
what you say

Caring for someone with
dementia brings its own specific
difficulties. You cannot converse
with the person you are caring
for – it's a long slow goodbye. You
need help to find others going
through the same thing, that's
the best support

Professionals take one
small part. If they could
look at being sensitive
to the carers lives and
how different we are it
could save us carers so
much anxiety

2 Step 2: Now think about these 'Before and After conversations' with older carers questions in this reflective exercise.



Reflective exercise: Before and After conversations with older carers questions

Before a conversation

What are your thoughts before making contact?

What are your feelings before making contact?

What do you think the carer is thinking and feeling?

What do you think the carer is hoping for?

What are your plans for this conversation?

What are you there to help with?

What can you bring to the conversation?

After the conversation

What was the outcome of the conversation?

What outcomes are important for the carer as a person in their own right?

What do you know about the history and biography of the carer and cared-for person's relationship?

What impact has caring had on their relationship?

Does the person describe themselves as a carer? Are they comfortable with this term?

Can you describe how the carer's relationships with family and friends have been affected by them becoming a carer at this stage of life?

Were you having any internal reactions during the conversation that you did not share? What were they?

In light of this reflection, what is your overall summary of the carer's strengths and support needs at this time?

What would be a successful outcome of your next conversation from the carer's perspective?

What would be a successful outcome from your perspective?

In light of the reflections you have made so far, are there any things you might do differently next time or in your work with other carers?

3 **Step 3:** The following are tips for relating to and supporting older carers. Please add your own from your responses to the reflective exercise.



Ten top Tips

1. Tune in to the carer's world before you ring or visit; be ready and prepared to really listen and empathise.
2. Think about your greeting – is a casual 'Hi, how are you today?' sufficient?
3. Expect interruptions, be flexible. Remember the carer is likely to be multi-tasking and may be very stressed.
4. Keep things simple and don't give too much information at once.
5. Don't leave a list of services expecting the carer to be able to navigate the system.
6. Make sure the carer is aware of local peer support groups and has access to reliable substitute care.
7. Check their GP and surgery staff are aware that the older person is a carer and that any reasonable adjustments have been made for them both to access health services.
8. Check appropriate information-sharing processes are in place.
9. Ensure the carer knows [who to contact in an emergency](#).
10. Ask the carer for feedback – how helpful has your conversation been?

Now add yours...



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