

Bearing Each Other's Burdens

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Martin Gare

Matthew 22:37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Think of a time in your life when things were really tough for you – what did people do or say that was most helpful?

What do you think you most need to be reminded of when it comes to responding to someone in need?

What does the research show about what makes a successful counselling relationship?

The resources the person brings	40%
A trusting relationship	30%
A sense of hope	15%
Skills and technique	15%

There are three central qualities in the helping relationship if it is to be effective :

Authenticity – the counsellor must be genuinely themselves

Empathy – seeing the world through the person's eyes

Unconditional concern for their wellbeing – involves accepting the person completely, in a non-judgemental way

Small group exercise

Find out which particular behaviour your partner is considering changing and then:

- Explain why she/he should make this change
- Give him her/him three specific benefits as to why they should make this change
- Tell him/her they could make this change if they really put their mind to it (preferably with examples of how you have made this sort of change)
- Emphasise how important it is to change and how much worse it will be if they don't follow through
- If you meet resistance, repeat any of the above but with more emphasis

Who here has ever been really listened to?

How did it affect you?

What was it about what the person did or said that made you feel listened to?

When someone really listens to us – when they do speak we are more able to hear.

Reflections - a basic summary or paraphrasing of what you have heard.

We have to listen carefully to be able to do it.

Listen especially for the emotional content.

Simple reflection vs a complex reflection.

- With the same partner, re-do the previous exercise but with an emphasis on listening attentively and with basic reflections.
- What difference did it make for you when you were empathically listened to whilst discussing the issue you want to change?

When we really listen it can also affect us?
How?

- We see the problem through the other person's eyes which in turn creates more opportunities to establish common ground.
- We develop more empathy and compassion which helps us to work more collaboratively with our clients.

- It is critical (if somewhat slippery) for us to think carefully about **how** we speak to people, not just **what** we say to them.
- The "spirit" of a conversation is a more powerful predictor of change than the use of specific strategies.
- However, the spirit of a conversation is often difficult to define or describe.
- It comprises empathic listening, collaborative discussions, genuine respect and our personal style.

Basic assumption in relation to change:
The experience of being listened to is the most powerful force for change.

People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they themselves have discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others.

Pascal's Pansees, 17th century

I don't know why they keep telling me I should do something about my "drinking problem". I like to have a beer or two but don't all blokes? Sure I have lost my licence for being over the limit but you know a lot of blokes do it but just don't get caught. I was just unlucky.

If you want to know about a "drinking problem" you should have seen what my old man was like. I always swore I would never be like him. Anyway since I've lost my licence I am only drinking light beers. I did get stuck into it on Friday night when we were watching the footy but I paid for it the next day. I felt as crook as a dog the whole day.

Ambivalence

Ambivalence precedes change – sustain talk vs change talk.

When someone talks of a problem behaviour there is usually a mixture of sustain talk and change talk.

Amplify ambivalence - It is critical that we notice the change talk and then ask questions to get the client to elaborate upon this, when they do offer change statements.

Application to our work in with working with people in pain?

When we feel stuck in our support of someone – our first step should be to move to a listening stance.

In a nutshell :

Our principal stance should be one of empathic listening.

We need to carefully consider **how** we interact with the person we seek to support. The “spirit” of our interactions has a powerful influence on the client’s experience and their likelihood for change.

To help someone prepare for change we need to notice change talk and ask them to elaborate upon this.

Principles for helping people who are depressed:

- Be supportive – “be there”
- A listening ear
- It is critical not to make the person feel like they are being judged or that they are a failure
- Don’t underestimate the importance of practical support
- Importance of lifestyle - exercise and positive social contact, avoid alcohol and other drugs
- Assess for risk – enquiring will not do any harm, make sure you consult with someone more experienced, refer for outside help if someone is having thoughts of hurting themselves
- Take it seriously but don’t panic
