

Kowhai Programme

Support for patients, families & carers

Communication: The tricky business of making yourself clear

What are the hard things to discuss?

Are they.....

- Funerals/arrangements/wills
- Dying
- Leaving – how are you all going to cope/worries about the future
- How will you be able to do all the things that I used to do for you?
- Dealing with technology
- Changes in roles (how do I manage the finances?)
- Farewells – the uncertainty of when best to do this
- Things that I need to get off my chest (intimate/sorry/thank you)
- Dealing with differing points of view on the situation
- Dealing with different approaches/styles with different people
- Having difficulty with having the focus on self
- Having conversations with your Health professional re: change in focus on care (curative to palliative) – what do I want to know – what are the questions – what is informed consent?

Sometimes what is difficult for the 'patient' vs what is difficult for 'family/friends' to discuss is different.....

1. Patient:

- Who will look after them?
- My partner/family/whānau/friends are going to be left alone
- A changing system – am I going to be able to access what I need – are they?
- Financial concerns
- Planning for the future
- People not understanding how they feel about the changes happening to them
- I need to be strong/hide my emotions

2. Family/whanau:

- Who will look after me – be there for me?
- Who can I rely on now? (comfort)
- Planning for the future
- Not feeling a part of the care team (e.g. doctor talking to the patient and not including the family)
- I need to be strong/hide my emotions

Coping styles

In times of crisis, people have three types of coping styles to manage the situation they are facing. These are:

- Moving towards (seeking out information)
- Moving away (needing space – don't want to think about it)
- Moving against (I am going to seek other options on this)

Which is my style when I am facing a crisis? What beliefs sit behind this? What messages do I give myself in times of stress?

- What is the style of the other important people in my life?
- We strike difficulties when these styles clash – can be difficult to understand where the other person is coming from

Here are some tips to assist you with conversations that are difficult:

- Support – having people I feel safe and comfortable with me, a support person to remember what is said/or speak for me when I can't
- A time and place to think through – to get clear – to practice
- Deal with one difficult issue a time
- Courage
- Talking the issue through

- Positive relationship with others and health systems – knowing what is required will be done – so I can let go of my worry of thinking about it
- No distractions
- Watching for the opportunity
- Planning a time – having structure to my day
- Allow yourself to be less than perfect
- Awareness of others/self coping styles
- Writing lists

If you would like assistance with helping you manage communication within your relationships, whether you are on our hospice programme or a relative or friend of someone on the hospice programme, please speak with the Community Care Coordinator from Hospice who is supporting you, and they can refer to you see one of our counsellors for further support.

Alternatively, you can ring to speak with one of the counsellors directly: **Phone 473 6005**