# Spiritual Care Matters – Podcast Episode 1 – Full Transcript

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| Colin Gray: | Welcome to our first audio podcast for the course. I'm Colin Grey, and along with Leslie Greenaway we'll be presenting these audio podcasts. Today you'll hear from people who work in a care home talking about their experiences and what they understand spiritual care to mean. Let's get started. |
|  | First off, the very word spiritual is difficult and uncomfortable for some. We often think spirituality is about religious beliefs and that we're unqualified to get involved. Actually, when we realise that it's not about us trying to be especially spiritual, whatever that means, it's about learning to care for the human spirit. |
|  | The human spirit is to do with a person's need for meaning, for peace, or hope, which can be expressed in many ways. It's about what makes a person who they are, or in other words, what makes them tick. The member of staff who asks a resident, "How are you today?" And means it, is already involved in spiritual care. |
|  | In so many ways spiritual care is already happening in the day to day encounters between staff and residents, and residents and residents. It's little things like sharing a cup of tea, listening to the family news, laughing together, going for a walk. These are all examples of spiritual care. It's good practise, and it's good for both residents and staff. Now, let's listen to Maureen O'Neill. She works for Faith in Older People, an organisation that's committed to supporting the spiritual care for older people. |
| Maureen O'Neill: | Hello, I'm Maureen O'Neill. I'm director of Faith in Older People. We're a small charity and our concern is to look at the spiritual dimension as we grow older. For us, it's an integral part of how we carry on, what gives us the motivation to get up in the morning, how we've gathered our strength during our life, our experience. It can be of faith, but it can also be a number of other things. Creativity, it could be about music, but particularly, it's about relationship with other people. We exist because we relate to our family, our friends, and those who care for us. For them to understand our story and what really matters to us, is really important. Being listened to and feeling that people want to listen to us is critical to good spiritual care. |
|  | You can't give someone spiritual care, you can enable it to happen. I think that's an important factor that we need to take on board. I think small examples, and they're small examples of kindness, that we need to reflect on and put into practise. One thing that comes to mind was a patient at the end of life. The nurse was with him and speaking to him. He had his little treasures, and he was very anxious that those treasures should be buried with him. It was important that he felt he could talk to the staff member about that, and important that she heard what he needed, and also important that his sister knew what he wanted. It's the listening, and it's the small things, very often, that make a huge difference. That's what contributes to our spiritual makeup. |
| Colin Gray: | Listening to Maureen rei nforces that idea that our spirituality is all about the things that make us who we are, and give us a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives. For some, this is about their faith, and for others, it's about creativity, such as music and art. For all of us, it's about the little day to day things that make us smile. Maureen also talked about the importance of relationships with family and friends. In the care home, staff also have an important role in building relationships with residents. She tells us that a key to building these relationships lies in the quality of our listening and small acts of kindness. We'll be returning to this idea of relationship building and listening, later in the week. |
|  | In this next recording, a group of care home staff are having a conversation about what spiritual care means day to day for staff and residents. |
| Interviewer: | How about you tell me now about some examples of residents in the care home and the sorts of things that make them smile. |
| Staff Member: | All our residents are so different, aren't they, when we start thinking about them. Different things make them smile. There's no set answer. Even thinking about people that are incredibly close to each other. Think about the two brothers that we've just had come in. One of the brothers made a big promise to his mother that he would always look after the other brother. Now he's finding he's got more time on his hands. In many ways his spirituality has changed from looking after his brother to finding out he can do things that make him tick, like football. |
| Staff Member: | Even walking along the corridor. I think the interaction with staff, as well. Because, yesterday he was walking along and we met about four or five times, and I said, "We need to stop meeting like this." It gave him a big smile on his face, because he said, "No, we do, because otherwise people will start talking." |
| Staff Member: | I do think it's been a big transition for the one brother due to the fact that he's had this responsibility of his brother, and that promise to his mum has been such a priority to him. I do think there's been a bit of guilt, and it's taken time to adjust to that he can take reins on his own life and can enjoy his life again I suppose. |
| Staff Member: | And I also can think of one particular lady who moved in originally as respite and the family was feeling quite guilty, she wasn't really ready to move into a care home, and now they found this table of friends and sometimes their faces bright red. |
| Staff Member: | Tears rolling down their cheeks for laughter. |
| Staff Member: | Tears tolling down, and they've really, I can't imagine them not being here and being together because that spirituality has lifted so much, it has changed their lives actually. Say they'd been living at home, they wouldn't be having that social input. |
| Staff Member: | And the friendships, that's proper friendships, maybe then came together through different circumstances not necessarily wanting to come into a home. |
| Staff Member: | Definitely not wanting to come in. |
| Staff Member: | But that's definitely a positive outcome of when people do come in- |
| Staff Member: | A placement within a care home. |
| Staff Member: | Yeah, because they can isolate for so long, and now they've made friendships again. |
| Staff Member: | Definitely their banter's not religious in any way whatsoever. It's quite the other way. |
| Staff Member: | Definitely. |
| Staff Member: | They can't have that laugh and talk about other people. |
| Staff Member: | I can think of somebody else who we recently assessed, who was living with his wife, and his son who's got learning difficulties, and his wife couldn't cope any longer, and when we assessed him he was in his bed, remained in his bed more or less 24/7 in a room where you could just see the trees. |
| Staff Member: | There was no quality of life. |
| Staff Member: | No quality of life whatsoever. He's moved in to the care home, family is a bit reluctant and worried, and the gentleman is up and dressed every morning, having breakfast, socialising, chatting away to other people and his spirit has definitely lifted. |
| Staff Member: | Oh definitely. |
| Staff Member: | It's changed his life. |
| Colin Gray: | Did you notice how the staff referred to what makes people tick, and that moment for that person? They were emphasising that these moment aren't planned but they are part of what we do, and often happen during normal day-to-day activities like getting dressed. They're the things that raise a person's spirits. And this fits with what Maureen said earlier about the things that make us who we are and give us a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives. We also start to talk about religion, and faith, and how this is one aspect of spiritual care, but that not all staff and not all residents follow a religion. But they did say that spiritual care is about love, respect, and dignity, and that this is for everyone. |
|  | We'll returning to the religious and the faith dimension of spirituality later in the week. |
|  | Now it's your turn. Start with today's task which asks you to notice the moments or the actions that help to raise a resident's spirits. Look out for the little things that make people smile. There's lot of examples in this audio to help you know what to look out for, such as listening to residents, the conversations we have during day-to-day activities like getting dressed or enjoying creative activities like music and art. |
|  | Good luck with it, and I hope you enjoy it. |