# Spiritual Care Matters – Episode 2 - Transcript

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| Speaker 1: | So far in the course, we've been thinking about the little things that are already happening to support spiritual care. We suggested that it's not just what you do to support them, but it's the way you do it. This is about the skills that you use and the type of attention that you give in your day-to-day interaction with residents. In other words, developing communication skills and developing relationships. One way to think about this is to see life from a resident's perspective. For example, residents may be thinking or wanting to say, "Get to know me" or, "It's not just what you do, It's how you make me feel" or "Help me to feel comfortable, safe, and secure in my surroundings." |
|  | These comments are inviting us into the residents' world. This doesn't happen by chance. We can be proactive. We can develop our listening skills to help us to tune into the residents' feelings and their needs. In this next interview, Head of Care, Anna, talks about how staff can develop the way they use conversations with older people as a way to build relationships. She highlights the skills that'll help to make these conversations more meaningful. And more meaningful conversations help to build relationships, which have the capacity to grow. Here's Leslie's interview with Anna. |
| Leslie: | Welcome, Anna. Maybe you could just tell us a little bit about your role in the care home? |
| Anna: | I am Head of Care in Davidson House. I supervise the four team leaders directly and the Activities Coordinator, to ensure that the residents that we look after at Davidson House are surrounded by love, friendship, respect, dignity, and also being cared for in a person-centered way. |
| Leslie: | Okay. So, Taking this idea then, that it's not just what you do, it's the way that you do it, can you tell me about the sorts of skills that staff need and the types of attention they give that makes a real difference to residents' well-being? |
| Anna: | Yeah, I think to be a carer, we do training every week and so on and all sorts of personal development training, but I think what obviously is to be a carer can never be taught. You need to have that from the heart. And, I need to have compassion and I need to have a heart kind of thing, and want to look after people. And I think the biggest skill somebody can have is communication skills and the art of conversation, or body language, eye contact, a smile even. That can make a huge difference to a resident. As well as the practical stuff of personal care, assisting with eating and drinking, things like that. But I do think just a good heart, and a listening ear, and a shoulder to laugh on or cry on maybe, is definitely the best thing to them. |
| Leslie: | So that sort of sounds like a bit of a mixture of developing our communication skills, but also linked to relationship building. |
| Anna: | Definitely, yes. |
| Leslie: | So, you mentioned there the importance of conversations, especially when they become part of everyday life. Why are conversations important? |
| Anna: | Well I think that's what makes up your day to day whether you either live in the care home, and also for the staff who work in the care home, because a conversation can be so meaningful. It can be, maybe only a couple of minutes long, but mean so much to that person because somebody took time to listen to them, maybe give advice, or maybe just give a small opinion. But they've been listened to. And even myself, I mean when I go through a conversation with somebody it does make a difference on how that person reacts to my conversation and how they can help. Or, just listen to me, kind of thing. |
| Leslie: | So, you're sort of starting to talk there about how we listen day to day and we have conversations as we go about our business, but you also mention the word 'a meaningful conversation'. What makes a conversation meaningful? |
| Anna: | I think, it's meaningful if that person, depending on what they want to talk about, and the way you react to them wanting to have that conversation with you. If you're preoccupied or, I mean it's a busy care home, there's a thousand things to do. The carers have a, well not just the carers, the whole team have a job to do for the residents; health and well-being to look after. But I do think if you just take that step back sometimes and not become so task-oriented, and person-centered, and get that person that couple of minutes of your time, not distracted, then that is meaningful to them because then they feel valued and respected as an individual. |
| Leslie: | So, just to help me understand that a bit better, can you give me a practical example of when you've seen staff having a meaningful conversation with residents? |
| Anna: | So, well for example, in just last week in one of our residents who, she does not have any diagnosis of dementia, she came to the care home, kind of not on her own accord she was vulnerable, it was a decision that had to be made for her health and well-being. |
|  | So, she can be quite down at times. And, one of the team leaders had seen that she wasn't dressed last week, and still in her jammies quite late on, which was quite unusual for this resident, so by that trigger of 'well that's out of character', the team leader went and asked, had a quiet conversation outside as she was having her cigarette. And, just asked if she wanted to have a chat, and kind of, what was wrong or if there was anything she wanted to talk about, anything that the team leader could help her with. And, the resident just explained that she couldn't put her finger on why she felt like that. |
|  | And the way the team leader, I could see from my office window because it looks right onto the courtyard the interaction between the two of them, it was quite sombre at first. I mean the team leader was trying to cheer her up, but I think she realised that there wasn't going to be that. The resident was down and she respected that. So she says "well, is there anything that I could help with?". But she just wanted to have a chat, because she wanted to offload how she was feeling, but she could not put any words why she was feeling like that. And the team leader just really took on word. And actually I heard the resident turn around and saying, "that's why you're a carer". |
|  | And I thought, that just sums it up that really she's just took on board a small trigger of not not being dressed in the morning, to that there's something more than that. And I do think that's a meaningful conversation, and it really, when I was thinking, it kind of made me proud. |
| Leslie: | Yeah, that's a very nice example. It sounds like the member of staffs, the team leader, was, you know if you come down to the nitty gritty, she was using her sense of awareness and alertness about what was happening and noticing. She was inviting the resident to join in the conversation. She was using questions to get the conversation going. But, then she's letting go, and letting the resident… |
| Anna: | Also, respecting that maybe she doesn't want to discuss that, but she knows that somebody is there for her, kind of thing, if she ever did. |
| Leslie: | And then what kicks in then is how well that team leader listens and that whole business of listening skills. |
| Anna: | And very much person-centered around that individual. |
| Leslie: | So that suggests that not only do you listen, but you need to be alert to picking up the nonverbal vibes of these messages. |
| Anna: | I was there, like from afar and then that's your cue to maybe start that conversation up. |
| [00:08:31]Speaker 1: | From Anna's said, there are some pretty practical things that staff can do to support the well-being of residents and to turn conversations into meaningful conversations. Practising our act of listening is a good starting point. So, how is active listening to different from what we do already, and what does it involve? Here are some pointers. |
|  | Firstly, it's about how we listen. That means, using gestures, tone of voice, eye contact, and body language. That means being approachable, none judgemental, and respectful. |
|  | Secondly, it's about being more aware that we listen to each other on different levels. Now that means that mostly likely we're only partly listening as we're thinking about we're going to reply or what we're going to say. We may be distracted by other things going on around us. In active listening though, we're truly seeing and hearing the other person. Paying attention without rehearsing our own responses, not judging, or assuming. Now, at a deeper level of active listening, we might be able to catch the unsaid words and some of the person's feelings. |
|  | Remember Anna's example, it showed a member of staff who appreciated a need for silences. This allowed the resident time to gather their thoughts and express them in a way that they wanted. She was truly seeing and hearing the other person. And, she was tuned into their needs and their feelings. |
|  | So, our task for today is all about active listening. We'd like you to try out some active listening during a short conversation with a resident. As you're listening, try to be more aware of how you're listening. So good luck with that and enjoy your conversations with residents. |