

Circles of Care

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER – FRIENDLY CALLS

A regular phone call might be one of the simplest and most supportive things you can do.

A Circle of Care is not just about giving and receiving help. It is about making relationships among community members. Older adults appreciate having someone that they know well and can trust to help them. Thus, it is important to spend a little time to get to know each other. This is more difficult when you can only talk by phone or while maintaining physical distancing.

Expect Differences

Some older adults, especially those who live alone, may feel lonely. These individuals may enjoy conversation and welcome chatting with you. They may value this as much as receiving help with errands. Others prefer more privacy and do not wish to reveal much about themselves. Respect the comfort level of the person you are talking with.

Make the Most of Your Voice

- Speak lower, not louder. As we age, we lose the ability to hear higher frequencies.
- Instead of repeating something louder to be understood, re-phrase it.
- Practice silence. Take time to listen. Try not to jump in or finish the older person's sentences.
- No background noise.

To Get to Know the Person Better

- Share a little bit about yourself so that the person can get to know you better. You might talk about:
 - where you grew up and how you came to live in this community
 - the make-up of your family and pets
 - things you like to do
 - interests or skills you have.
- Ask the person to tell you a bit about themselves. You may ask similar questions as to what you shared with them. You might ask:
 - Did you grow up in this town?
 - Do you have grandchildren? Is there family nearby?
 - What kind of work did you used to do?
 - What types of things do you like to do? Or how do you like to spend your time?
 - Do you have a pet?

- Check in with how things are going:
 - How are you holding up today?
 - How did you feel this week? What would you do differently next week?
 - What are you grateful for right now?
 - What's helping you relax?
 - What's helping you stay positive?
 - What's something good that happened today?

Tips While Making Conversation

- Try to discover things that you have in common.
- Be alert if the person seems hesitant to respond or share. No pressure!
- Be mindful that the person may be fearful of scams.
- If they share certain feelings or emotions with you, don't judge. You might say: "It sounds like you are sad," OR "It appears you are feeling angry." OR "That sounds like a difficult situation."

Best way to offer assistance

- Ask, "How can I help you?" rather than "Do you need any help?"
- Make it easy for the person to say, "Yes." If you are going shopping, ask if there is anything the person would like you to pick up.

Topics to Avoid

- Avoid discussing your own personal problems.
- Do not offer opinions in family, legal, medical or financial matters.
- Do not take sides in the personal problems of the individual, especially issues involving their family.
- Avoid controversial subjects, even if initiated by the individual. These types of discussions can make for an unpleasant visit.

Respect Privacy

- Don't share personal information about the person with anyone else unless the individual gives you permission to do so.