



COMPASSIONATE  
COMMUNITIES

# The Importance of Listening

To *'tender'* conversations



This leaflet sets out key tips for how to listen to someone talking about their death plans or dying.

## Why is it important to listen to someone talking about death or dying?

Listening allows people to say what they need to say. It allows people to be heard.

- \* Talking about fears and worries helps people to reduce feelings of anxiety.
- \* Talking helps people make plans.
- \* Talking lets someone else know about their choices.

## How to be a good listener...



When we listen

They are



### **Pay attention.**

You don't need to remember everything said, but you need to give it your full attention.

### **Be patient.**

It might take a while for the person to get to the point. 'Tender conversations' can be uncomfortable, give them time to work things out.

### **Remove distractions from the environment.**

To really hear what is being said reduce noise by turning off your mobile and turning down the TV or radio.

### **A good question to ask at any point is:**

*'What's important to you?'*

**Asking this can help steer the conversation onto practical ground, and give the talker something to focus on.**

*We listen with our ears and hear with our hearts.*

**Control your emotions.**

It may not be easy to listen to your loved one talk about their death or dying. Take deep breathes this will help.

**Do not judge.**

Listen to what is being said without bias or judgement. This is not about you agreeing or disagreeing, this is about you listening.

**Summarise at the end.**

Summarising what has been said shows that you were listening, and have understood what was said. It also brings people comfort and reassurance.

Be gentle with yourself - some of this might be upsetting for you.

Take time to process all of this afterwards.

Perhaps write your feelings down

Who might you choose to be your listener to talk to about your end of life plans?

Your life and your choices: plan ahead Northern Ireland by Macmillan is a guide to help you plans about your future. Available at: <https://be.macmillan.org.uk/be/p-21065-your-life-and-your-choices-plan-ahead-northern-ireland.aspx>.



More information can be also found on the Dying Matters website at  
<https://www.dyingmatters.org/> .

**Get in touch...**

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