



Tips for Being Seen and Heard

1. Involve the Care Recipient

Make sure the person receiving care is part of the decision-making process. Their input is important!

2. Develop an Action Plan

Set realistic goals and break them down into small, manageable steps. This makes it easier to follow through.

3. Prepare Questions in Advance

Write down your questions ahead of time so you won't forget them during discussions.

4. Keep a Written Record

Write down answers, important contacts, and health details. This will help you remember everything for future reference.

5. Remain Calm

Stay calm and composed. This helps you communicate better and makes the conversation smoother.

6. Communicate Clearly & Directly

Be clear and to the point. Make sure to express your needs in a straightforward way.

7. Be Persistent and Follow Up

Don't give up easily. Keep following up, as persistence often leads to better results.

8. Identify the Right Person

Find the right contact person to talk to. This will help you avoid wasting time and get the answers you need.

9. Choose the Right Time

Talk about important issues when you are calm and focused. This makes it easier to have a good conversation.

Hard to Handle: The Art of Facilitating Difficult Conversations

By Mark Phillips, *Associate Roster Member with MediateBC*

This article could easily replace the word “Hard” with “Heart.” When we have tough conversations with vulnerable people, like the elderly, we should use our hearts to connect with them. Empathy, which is imagining yourself in someone else's situation and feeling what they might be feeling, is important when discussing hard topics, especially when we want to find solutions. When one person has less power in these talks, empathy can be the most powerful tool. Approaching conversations with compassion helps build trust. Good relationships are more likely to survive difficult discussions when emotions are shared respectfully. Below are some common issues that come up between individuals and their caregivers.

When we talk about health care planning, we should focus on the person's strengths. Assisted living should build on what the individual can do now while also considering their future needs and choices. If someone wants to discuss MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying), we must recognize their strengths and respect their choices. Empathy is very important in these conversations!

Financial discussions might include talking about the Public Guardian and Trustee. While we want to focus on strengths, we also need to manage expectations. These talks will go better when heartfelt thoughts are shared openly.

Conversations about relationships can be started by the person receiving care, but not always. They may involve family members, like siblings, children, and partners. Sometimes, these discussions can uncover issues like elder abuse, which are difficult and raise safety concerns. Encouraging a dialogue requires the facilitator to invest their heart, not just their judgment.

Facilitated conversations can help strengthen family relationships. Having these discussions now, before it's too late, ensures that the voice of the individual in care is heard. This helps loved ones plan ahead. A well-facilitated conversation can delay the need for institutional care or help decide if that is the right choice. Importantly, these conversations should always come from the heart.

Reflection:

- How can you show empathy in your conversations with the person you care for, and can you think of times when being empathetic helped your talks?
- What strengths does the person you care for have that you can highlight during important care or planning conversations?
- List the ways in which you can create a safe space for honest and respectful sharing, especially when talking about tough topics like health care, finances, or family relationships.