

Worksheet 4.5: Advice giving

Carers often ask what to say when Edi asks for advice. 'Mum, I don't know what to do. Tell me what I should do next.' How can they give advice while still motivating Edi to think about making their own changes, and how can they show they believe that Edi has the resources to come up with their own ideas?

The MI approach generally promotes avoiding giving advice wherever possible because it can suggest the carers believe they are the expert and can suggest the carers don't believe Edi has the tools within them to deal with their situation. In addition, Edi is less likely to change on the advice of someone else than if they have voiced the desire to change. A good example is where GPs have 5 minutes to assess a patient and write a prescription. They don't have enough time to really listen. Very often patients are not motivated to take their medication and end up back at the GP. Everyone quickly becomes frustrated. Of course, giving advice can sometimes be appropriate and necessary and the key is in the timing and how it is given, the idea is to plant seeds, trusting them to grow if they are right, rather than bulldozing in with advice and direction.

Ways to give advice that are less likely to increase resistance to change include:

- Ask permission – 'Do you mind if I make a suggestion?'
- Offer choices – then Edi can choose one or toss a coin, pick a card, etc.
- Talk about what others might do – 'Would you like to know something that worked for xyz?'
- Consult higher authority – 'I heard at the workshops that.../ the consultant tells me.../ I read that...'

As a group or in pairs think up a scenario in which Edi might ask you for advice. Try using some of the suggestions on this worksheet to come up with your own menu of options and useful phrases. Take it in turns to be the carer. Alternatively use this scenario:

James, age 17, has been given a meal plan by a nutritionist and has been pretty good at following it. He is slowly but surely gaining weight and is starting to think about socialising with his friends. Inevitably he is worried that any interaction with his pals will involve food (snacks and/or mealtimes). He has asked Mum to tell him how he should go about this. Mum is trying to encourage James to be more independent and make decisions such as these for himself. How could she approach this? Come up with a menu of options and useful phrases.

There are times when Edi will need more guidance and will actively seek advice from carers. Using these guidelines carers can give advice whilst still motivating Edi to think up their own ideas and move towards independence, taking more and more responsibility for their own recovery.