

Worksheet 5.5.1: Developing useful phrases for the pre- contemplation stage or when facing a lapse when in recovery

It is so frustrating for carers when Edi appears to have no idea why anyone is worried, or has an idea but has no intention of making any changes. Edi is likely to get very defensive and angry when challenged. 'I think you have an eating disorder' can be met with a violent explosion of emotional outburst – a bit like taking the lid off a fizzy coke bottle. Carers are likely to feel totally helpless when they perceive that their loved one is totally stuck.

Remember that Edi derives many benefits from the ED behaviours. In addition, the impact of starvation and/or chaotic eating patterns on the brain makes Edi supersensitive and defensive (very sensitive, poor at emotional regulation, very good at detecting negative emotion and perceiving threat, great at the minute detail).

Write down as many useful phrases that you can think of that you might use when Edi is in the pre-contemplation stage, or has had a lapse and is struggling to acknowledge this.

Two examples to get you started:

It must be confusing for you when you think we are worrying unnecessarily.

I've noticed you are always really cold and tired.

At the pre-contemplation stage Edi is likely to be especially supersensitive to criticism and/or any hint of negativity, so keeping calm and enquiring gently about how things are for them with calm observations of things you are seeing, while also giving affirmations and reminding them of the bigger picture of life can be helpful.