

Worksheet 10.4: The Nutritional Risk Ruler

This is another version of the Readiness Ruler and is a really useful tool that carers can use to open up conversations about change/moving forward in terms of Edi taking more responsibility for their own nutritional health (see *SBC*, Chapter 12, pp. 172–4). It can also be used to discuss the balance between Edi’s motivation to change and the carer’s objective observation of evidence of Edi’s nutritional safety.

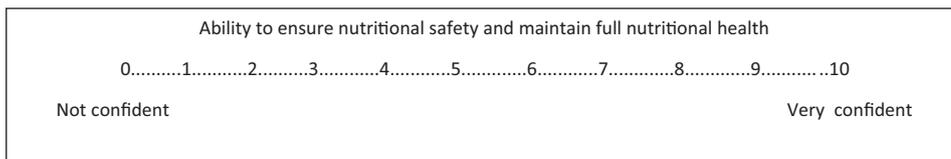


Figure 10.4 Nutritional Risk Ruler

Plan a conversation with Edi around nutritional risk. If possible role play with another carer taking on the role of Edi.

Useful questions might include:

- On a scale of 0 to 10 how would you rate your current ability to manage your own nutritional wellbeing?
- Why that score rather than 0?
- What strengths have you drawn on to get to that score?
- What would have to happen to increase your score by half a point?
- What help would you need to help you get to 7 or 10?

If there is a discrepancy between Edi’s score and the score the carer would give Edi:

- I am interested you give yourself a score of 10. Do you mind if I say what score I would give you based on what I am observing?
- I could give you a 6 out of 10, rather than a 10. You are doing so many good things [list them]. However, we are concerned that you are not consuming enough to feed your body properly [state your reasons – what have you observed]. Am I missing something? [This gives Edi an opportunity to verbalise what she is doing.]
- I could give you a higher score than that because [list what you have observed] and I can see that your confidence is still quite low. What can I do to help you to increase your level of confidence. I know you can do it.

Virtual carer role play – Edi is confident

Carer: On a scale of 0 to 10 how would you rate your current ability to look after your own nutritional wellbeing?

Edi: 10..

Carer: That's interesting as I can see you are struggling with your meal plan and you found the supermarket shop this week extremely difficult. Help me understand your rating. Perhaps I am missing something.

Edi: OK well this week has been tricky. You know exam pressure making me anxious. Normally a 10. Maybe this week it is more like 7. After the exams it will be back to 10.

Carer: So when you are anxious that has an impact on your ability to look after your nutritional health. Thank you for explaining that. Part of recovery is to be able to recognise and plan for difficult times and it is good that you can be so self-aware and reflective. Perhaps we can work out some strategies for the future that will help you to keep on top of your nutritional health even when you are anxious. Would that be a good idea? I know you can do it and it is great to see your confidence increasing as every week goes by. By the time you get to university you should be in good shape to keep on top of your nutritional health.

Edi: That sounds good. Thanks Mum.

Virtual carer role play – Edi shuts down the conversation

Carer: On a scale of 0 to 10 how would you rate your current ability to look after your own nutritional wellbeing?

Edi: I am not interested in your stupid ruler. F*** off.

Carer: I'm asking you about it because I really care and I want to be able to do the most that I can to help you. I don't want you to suffer alone and I want us to be open and honest with each other. I would like your life to be more than just about food. Let's make some plans for the weekend.

The Nutritional Risk Ruler can be used to open up a conversation with a solution-focused questioning style, balanced with plenty of reflections and affirmations as well as several broken record phrases. For example, 'we know you can do it, we believe in you, you know what you have to do'. A useful quote from a sufferer who is now in recovery:

Carers must not feel that their support falls on deaf ears. The knowledge may not be used until the sufferer is ready to accept recovery,

a seed has been sown for the future. Personally, I heard every word but just wasn't ready to use it until the time was right. Please don't give up on us.

A word of caution as conversations around nutritional risk are often fraught with difficulty and can invoke intense emotional reactions as illustrated in the second scenario. Rolling with resistance, unconditional love and distraction can be used to sidestep the anger and reconnect with the person.