

**Collaborative Care New Maudsley Skills Workshops for Carers
Additional Workshop Capsule - Meal Support**

These workshop capsules have been created from real life scenarios considered in previous workshops and are designed to help carers to review and reflect on specific areas that can prove extremely difficult to challenge.

In this capsule we review and reflect on the challenges of meal support using a common scenario in which the sufferer (Edi) has agreed with the specialist ED support team to stick to the meal plan, and then once at home finds it very difficult .

Many carers will find that they need to provide Edi with a great deal of support at meal times in the refeeding stage, especially if there are no signs that Edi can ensure his or her nutritional safety. This is an exceptionally difficult task and hopefully carers will have been given some guidance and support from their loved one's care team. Sadly, this is often not the case. Mealtimes end up being fraught with difficulty and high emotions which are not conducive to Edi successfully finishing a planned meal.

Carers can also read Skills Based Learning Chapter 12 p204 to 210 which outlines 16 key skills for carers to use when they are supporting Edi with eating at home. Carers can draw from this suggested list to come up with their own ideas of what will work best in their home situation. In this capsule we use the SUCCEED DVD vignette on meal support.

This vignette really illustrates how distress levels can quickly escalate at mealtimes and there are many important messages for carers on how best to manage when Edi is really struggling to stick with the plan.

Meal Support Vignette (SUCCEED DVD)

In this vignette Rachel was discharged from an ED unit 2 months ago having reached her target weight. For the first month, she adhered to the meal plan support from the unit and maintained her weight. However, Mum is becoming increasingly concerned that for the last week she is noticing creeping signs both of denial and restrictive behaviours. Mum has taken responsibility for sitting with Rachel throughout the meals. This vignette portrays a typical evening meal.

In clip one emotions quickly escalate for both Rachel and her Mum and the result is that Rachel is unable to eat the meal. In clip two Mum keeps calm and is gentle but firm with Rachel and uses the skills she has learned to coach Rachel through the meal.

Example of Carer Responses to Clip One:

In clip one Mum displays several animal behaviours including:

Rhino – I think you should.... Your best isn't good enough....

Jellyfish – you are upsetting me..... I couldn't cope if.....

The tone of the meal is incredibly tense and extreme high anxiety for both Rachel and Mum. Mum is critical, hostile and judgemental.

How are Rachel and Mum feeling by the end of the meal?

Rachel	Mum
Not listened to	Frustrated
Unsupported	Worried
Anxious	Anxious
Angry	Angry
Guilty	Guilty
No confidence	Tearful
Low self esteem	Driven to nag and whine
Not hungry	Exhausted
Alone	Desperate
Bullied by Ed voice	Hopeless
Bullied by Mum	

What could Mum have done differently?

One of the key problems seems to be lack of planning. Rachel is unprepared for such a complicated meal. Mum fails to acknowledge the huge challenge that this rich meal poses for Rachel. Proper planning with the agreement of both parties before the meal would have helped to reduce the surprise factor.

Mum quickly became cross when Rachel resisted. Both their anxiety levels rose to very high levels. Mum could have rolled with resistance and tried to keep calm whilst maintaining a firm stance with the ED voice.

Example of Carer Responses to Clip Two

In this clip Mum is much more supportive, she externalises the illness on several occasions and uses distraction techniques throughout the meal. She also calmly reminds Rachel of goals that she had agreed with the care team.

Mum uses the following techniques:

Reminding Rachel of her goals:

“When you were discharged you said one of the things you were really proud about was the fact that you were able to eat what you described as “normal” food in the unit ie: you no longer felt you had to eat those safe foods dictated by the anorexia. This used to be one of your favourites before your illness and we haven’t had it for a while so that’s why I decided to cook it tonight.”

Externalising the Illness and Unconditional Support:

“I know it’s difficult and I know that your anorexia will continue to play tricks on you with her constant nagging and chattering in your ear. Until you’re strong enough to do it by yourself, I’m here as your support in helping you silence her.”

“I trust you, my daughter, not your illness and you, my daughter knows exactly what you have to do if you want to start university again in October”

Reminding Rachel of the bigger picture:

“Right now, adhering to the meal plan might seem like an uphill struggle at times, but keep that travel vision of yours in mind. That’s a healthy behaviour – silence your gremlin. She won’t like that but I have faith that you are stronger.”

Addressing the prospect of post meal anxiety:

“Perhaps we can go and take a short walk after we’ve finished with the meal or go and watch a TV program……. We can do some of our goal setting and action planning and perhaps alleviate the sick feeling you are anticipating”

Learning:

When providing meal support carers will ideally balance a firm approach with the ED, whilst also encouraging Edi to remember the bigger picture in a warm, empathic and motivational way.

Useful phrases when being firm with Edi might include:

“eating is non negotiable”

“you know you have to eat to live”

“you know what you need to do”

“when you have finished the meal we can……”

Useful phrases acknowledging the challenges of refeeding and the carers belief Edi can do this might include:

“I know this is hard, I believe you can do this.”

“I can see you are struggling today, you have the strength to get through this”

“It must be so confusing when you have that ED voice chattering in your ear Let’s talk about other things to help quieten it .”

“You have always been determined. Keep going, don’t let the ED win.”

Write your own useful phrases that you could calmly use when supporting your loved one to eat a meal: