

# the stages of caring facilitator guide

## learning outcome

Your staff will be able to recognise how a carer might be feeling at different stages of their caring journey as well as identify ways in which to support carers during that journey.

## learning method

Scenario and group exercise using handout.

## time required

Approximately 45 minutes.

## facilitator notes

1. Introduce this activity by explaining how carers often enter a journey which entails a cocktail of emotions. The journey is individual and unique to each carer, but there are certain patterns and stages that most carers go through. It is helpful to consider each of these stages when thinking about how best to support carers as a worker and as an organisation.
2. Divide participants into four groups to explore the following scenario and identify the likely feelings and issues that they might have to face at each of the four stages in the caring role and how best they might be supported.

### scenario

to get you thinking about the carer's journey, imagine that one day you learn that your partner or nearest relative is no longer able to manage by themselves because of a sudden illness or disability and they will need to rely on you for considerable support.

3. Provide participants with activity two handout encourage participants to consider the likely issues that could crop up causing negative (or positive) emotions such as anger, anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem and how best to alleviate or overcome them.
4. Invite a volunteer from each group to feedback on one of the four stages and encourage the whole group to reflect on or add to the points raised.

## activity two - level 1 the stages of caring facilitator guide

### note

This exercise is loosely based on Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's 'grief cycle' outlined within her book *On Death and Dying* (1969). Whilst the grief cycle focuses on death and bereavement, it provides a useful perspective on the emotions that carers experience when taking on a caring role. It is important to stress to participants that it is not a rigid linear process and there can be an ebb and flow between stages. Carers will also react very differently to their caring responsibilities depending on the level of education and knowledge about caring, their background and ethnicity. **Therefore the stages should be used as a guide and not a blueprint.** To find out more about the Kubler-Ross grief cycle, go to [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)

### what other approaches might I consider?

- Would an alternative model of grief and loss be more suitable for my particular work setting and target audience? Other references for alternative models of grief and loss, such as the Lafond model, are as follows:
- Bruce, E.J. & Schultz, C.L. (2001) *Nonfinite Loss and Grief: A Psychoeducational Approach*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Jones, D.W. (2004). Families and serious mental illness: Working with loss and ambivalence. *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(7), 961-979
- Lafond, V. (2002). *Grieving Mental Illness: A Guide for Patients and their Caregivers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc
- Miller, F. (1996). Grief therapy for relatives of persons with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 47, 633-637
- Miller, F., Dworkin, J., Ward, M & Barone, D. (1990) A Preliminary Study of Unresolved Grief in Families of Seriously Mentally Ill Patients. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 42,12, 1321-1325
- Could I invite carers themselves to talk about a particular stage in their caring journey, how they felt at that time and what helped them to cope (or what might have helped)? Can my local carer centre help me to identify carers who are willing to share their experiences?
- What sort of support might the carer need before, during and after sharing their stories? What remuneration will the carer need? Go to the South East Skills for Care website for a practical guide on "How to involve Users and Carers in Social Care Education and Training". [www.southeast.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.southeast.skillsforcare.org.uk)
- Can I explore the carer's journey with participants from a different perspective? For example examining the main modes of caring: engulfed mode, symbiotic mode and boundary setting mode.

**activity two - level 1**  
**the stages of caring**  
**facilitator guide**

**DVD: The Three Main Modes of Caring**

NHS Swindon in partnership with Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Avon and Wiltshire Health Partnership Trust has produced a DVD on the concept of three 'modes of caring': Engulfed mode, symbiotic mode and boundary setting mode. This concept is based upon research by Professor Julia Twigg of the University of Kent. The DVD, together with supporting guidance and case studies, is designed to help staff understand why carers respond to the challenges of caring in different ways. It also helps staff to recognise the mode that a carer might be in so that they can adapt their own approach and responses.

For further information please contact Joanna Ridley, Carers Development Manager, Swindon Borough Council and NHS on 01793 466957 / 07775 013668 or email [Joanna.ridley@swindon-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:Joanna.ridley@swindon-pct.nhs.uk)

**Common core principles covered by this activity: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.**