

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Being an 'accidental counsellor'

## TIP SHEET

*Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.*

During this time when we are collectively dealing with COVID-19, it is natural that some of us will cope better than others. At times, we may experience family, friends or neighbours reaching out to us for emotional support.

**So what is the best way to help? Here are some tips about how we can assist them:**

### 1. Focus on helping rather than 'rescuing'

This means supporting the person to look at options that may resolve their problem or situation, rather than trying to 'fix' the problem for them. Taking this approach means the person maintains their confidence to make their decisions about what action they want to take.

### 2. Show Empathy

When supporting the person, show compassion, maintain your self-awareness, keep some detachment from the situation, and show the person empathy. Empathy is sitting alongside the person listening without judgment about their situation, and tuning into how they are feeling.

### 3. Be present in the moment with the person you are listening to

You can show this by using listening skills such as:

- Paraphrasing - repeating the content told to you in your own words back to the person.
- Summarising - succinctly summing up the main points that have been shared with you by the person.
- Reflective listening - an approach where you reflect the meaning of what the person has said back to them so that they have an opportunity to confirm that you have understood them correctly, or that they may need to further explain the situation.

### 4. Use questions

This will help the person explore options that could address the problem, and questions that help them look at the issue from a different perspective. Then help them generate possible solutions and create a 'pros' and 'cons' list for each of them.

**5. Recognise when you have helped the person all that you can**

If they are still having difficulty, refer the person to a professional counsellor. You can continue to offer them informal support while they receive support from a qualified practitioner.

**6. When helping others it is important to maintain your self-care**

This will ensure you have energy to give to others. Activities such as yoga, meditation, walking and deep breathing will help keep you healthy and balanced so that you are in a position 'lend an ear' to others in need.

**As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.**

Our Education team will continue to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face once government guidelines allow. You might like to like us on Facebook to keep up to date with support information and details of services we can offer during this time.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on being an '**Accidental Counsellor**' once available, or any of our other courses, please email [education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au](mailto:education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au) or call 6164 0200.