

# Tips for Careworkers: Psychosocial Assessment and Support



**What it is:** Psychosocial support includes mental well-being and social aspects of a person's life. It responds to emotions, thoughts, attitudes, motivation, and behavioural needs as well as their social circumstances. This includes their sense of identity, relationships, or living arrangements.

**Why it matters:** Older people can have stress related to frailty, loss of independence, money, changed living arrangements, or social isolation. A life-limiting illness can make it even harder to adapt and cope. Together this can lead to anxiety, depression, grief, distress, and loss of identity and meaning.

Identifying and addressing a person's psychosocial needs is important. Recognising and understanding the family's role and need for support is also important.

**What I need to know:** Ongoing meaningful conversations can help to identify any needs or concerns.

Psychosocial needs are best addressed by a multidisciplinary team. This can include careworkers, counsellors, GPs, medical specialists, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, occupational therapists, and social workers.

Friendly communication is important especially if the older person is feeling lonely or isolated.

Information about support groups for carers might also be helpful for families.

## Do

### Tips for talking:

- Take time to talk with and understand the older person and their family
- Take time to reflect on what they have said
- Ask them how they feel and what they think they need
- Use open questions that require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer, e.g. 'What would help?' is better than 'Do you need help?'
- Encourage them to participate in activities and connect with others in the facility or their community.

## Do

Look out for physical symptoms such as breathlessness, not sleeping well, pain, sadness, crying, or weight loss. Let your supervisor know if you notice any of these.

## Do

Talk with your supervisor about massage, art therapy, music therapy, spiritual support, or counselling for the older person.

**Name:**

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## My reflections:

What approaches to psychosocial care are used in my workplace?

How can I support a client or resident's psychosocial needs?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Person-Centred Care  
Talking About Dying  
Supporting Families

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