

Caring for Community

Practical guidance for family, friends, faith leaders, community leaders and other trusted supporters.



WHEN PEOPLE COME TO YOU

Being trusted matters. It does not mean you must carry everything.

People often speak first to someone they already know and trust. You can listen, respond with care and help with a next step without becoming the person's counsellor, clinician or entire support system.

1 BE PRESENT

Listen before trying to fix. Give the person space to explain what is happening in their own words.

2 ASK WHAT THEY NEED

They may want listening, practical help, information, cultural or faith support, professional care - or a combination.

3 RESPECT CHOICE

Work with the person where possible. Do not make decisions for them simply because you are worried.

4 KNOW YOUR ROLE

You can care deeply and still have limits. Clinical assessment, diagnosis and treatment belong with appropriately qualified professionals.

CORE MESSAGE

Mental health literacy is not about turning everyone into a mental-health professional. It is about helping more people notice, respond with compassion and know where support can be found.

Support With, Not For

Helpful support preserves the person's voice, choice and responsibility.



BOUNDARIES IN PRACTICE

Walk alongside the person - do not take over.

Palm Tree's training distinguishes supportive actions from taking responsibility for the whole situation. Agree on the next step rather than automatically doing everything yourself.

SUPPORT WITH

Helpful support can look like:

- Sitting with someone while they make a call, if they want that.
- Helping write questions for a GP or other appointment.
- Helping identify a service or interpreter option.
- Checking in after an appointment when that fits your relationship and role.
- Asking what the person wants before involving other people.
- Encouraging more than one safe source of support.

TAKING OVER

Watch for:

- Making decisions without the person when there is no immediate safety reason to do so.
- Becoming available at all hours or feeling you can never step away.
- Keeping significant concerns entirely to yourself because the person asked you to.
- Trying to diagnose, provide therapy or manage medication.
- Becoming the only person they rely on.
- Carrying responsibility that belongs with a professional service or emergency response.

A BOUNDARY CAN STILL SOUND CARING

"I care about you and I want to keep supporting you. I cannot be the only person holding this. Let us think about who else we can involve."

Community + Professional Support



Support does not have to be either community or clinical.

MORE THAN ONE PATHWAY

The strongest support may use both.

Family, friends, elders, community leaders, faith leaders and cultural connections can provide belonging, meaning and practical support. Professional services can provide assessment, treatment and specialised care. What matters is what the person wants and what is safe.

1 PEOPLE

Family, friends, elders, neighbours, community leaders, faith leaders and trusted professionals.

2 PLACES

Community centres, cultural organisations, places of worship, schools, libraries and community health services.

3 PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, social workers and specialist services.

4 COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Belonging, language, culture, faith, food, storytelling, shared care, cultural knowledge and leadership.

ASK RATHER THAN ASSUME

Who feels safe and helpful to involve? Is faith or community support important to you? Would you like professional support as well? Is there anyone you do not want involved? What would make the next step easier?

PALM TREE PRINCIPLE

Do not replace community with professionals - or professionals with community. Build the pathway around the person's preferences, needs and safety.

Boundaries Protect Both People



Widen support before one person becomes the whole support system.

WHEN SUPPORT STARTS TO FEEL TOO HEAVY

Caring does not require unlimited availability.

A boundary is not rejection. It can protect the relationship, reduce burnout and help connect the person with support that can continue when you are unavailable.

1 YOU ARE THE ONLY SUPPORT

The person says nobody else can be involved or contacts you for every crisis.

2 YOU FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTCOME

You feel you must keep them safe by yourself or that anything that happens will be your fault.

3 YOUR OWN LIFE IS BEING AFFECTED

Sleep, work, family life, wellbeing or safety are being significantly affected.

4 THE NEED IS OUTSIDE YOUR ROLE

The person needs clinical assessment, treatment, crisis response, family-violence support or another specialist service.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Be clear about when and how you can help.
- Encourage another trusted person or professional service to join the support network.
- Use supervision, consultation or organisational procedures when support is part of your role.
- Look after your own wellbeing and seek support for yourself when needed.

IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE DANGER

Call 000 or go to an emergency department. For 24/7 crisis support: Lifeline 13 11 14 | Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.

EVIDENCE & SOURCE CHECK

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