



## HOW TO RELATE TO CARE RECEIVERS

(Adapted from 2004 Faith In Action National Conference Workshop)

### Building Rapport with Care Receivers

- Place yourself at the same level as the person with whom you are visiting. Sit down, if only for a few minutes.
- Say the person's name. Establish with the person how they wish to be addressed.
- Be yourself. Be ordinary. Take time to settle in. Let the person take your measure. This is a relationship; it cannot be one-sided.
- Observe and match mood and behavior. Match behaviors by breathing or talking at the same pace, or by sitting in the same position as the person. This creates the feeling that you are the "right" kind of person.
- Be guided by the care receiver about how much contact is comfortable. Some people want eye contact or physical contact. Others feel that it is an intrusion.
- Find common ground (e.g. explore interests, preferences in music, care receiver's background.)
- Always acknowledge heaviness, sadness, anger, or frustration before any other issues are raised.
- Encourage the care receiver to talk about his or her own feelings.
- Ask, don't tell.

### How Do You Know You Are on the Right Track?

There may be:

- A smile – sometimes a secret smile
- A startled reaction
- Welling up of tears
- Slowing of breathing
- Color returns

### How Do You Know You Are Off the Track?

There may be:

- An expression of tiredness – be sure not to over-extend the visit
- Negative response
- A tensing up
- A quickening of breath
- A holding of breath
- No response

### How Do You Get Back on Track?

- Ask the person what is happening now.
- Ask if there is something the person needs to do.
- Invite the person to do what they need to do.

**Things to Avoid:**

- Talking only about yourself
- Turning off the person's emotions
- Attempting to comfort with clichés
- Warnings
- Lecturing and blaming

**Cultural Aspects: Things You Need to Know**

- Be careful addressing people you don't know well, particularly people you serve, by their first names. Ask what they would like to be called.
- Don't assume you are being threatened if people from other cultures stand close to you while you are speaking. Evaluate their intent before acting and if the situation makes you uncomfortable, express it.
- Don't be too friendly or aloof with people you don't know well.
- Listen. Listen. Listen. Learn about others and be alert for cultural misunderstandings. However, also allow time for silences.
- Don't readily interpret the unwillingness of someone to look you in the eye as deviousness. Do not try to "stare people down."
- Be respectful in touching. Respect the care receiver's space and dignity.
- Moderate your tone and how loudly you speak. Slow down and talk more slowly. It will not only allow a non-native speaker to understand you but it will allow you to consider your choice of words.
- Do not talk about a culture even when you feel you are with individuals who share your cultural heritage.
- Always respect the beliefs of others, no matter how odd they seem when compared with your own.
- Be aware that different cultures use eye contact and gestures in different ways. If touching feels inappropriate or threatening, report to the office.