

# TUNING IN TO OTHERS



 **THE TREASURE WE SEEK**   
  Feeling connected with people living with later stage dementia  

## **Welcome to Tuning in to Others**

'Tuning in to Others' is the second in a group of four Treasure Hunt resources, developed in The Treasures project. Tuning in to Others can be used on its own, or alongside the other resources in the Treasure Hunt pack.

The 'Treasure Hunt' resources are designed to generate space for you to think about how you are before, during and after the visit. The resources also offer a bundle of ideas for you to possibly try out during the visit which may go some way in creating opportunities for connection.

## **What kind of Treasure Hunt is this?**

At the heart of the idea of a 'Treasure Hunt' within the Treasure project, is the view that there are gems and treasures to be found when engaging with people in the later stages of dementia. The gems and treasures to be found are moments of feeling connected.

To go on a Treasure Hunt is to be open and intentionally look for opportunities for connection, with the person with dementia, in ways which might be new or a bit different to what you have tried before. The treasures to be found might be in the tiniest of moments, a small spark or a new discovery.

## Tuning in to Others

Tuning in to Others is a resource which can be used during your online visit with your family member/friend. It describes a range of ideas for tuning in to how your family member/friend is during the visit, as well as to their environment and anything that is happening around them that might influence your online visit.

*Purpose:* To offer you ideas for being alongside your family member/friend in ways which help you tune in with what is going on for them, without having any set goals for what will happen during the visit.

## Minding our P's and Q's: Pace, Pause, Questions and Play

Some Things to Keep in Mind When Communicating with People with Dementia.



### Pace

It can be useful to think about the speed at which you speak, and slowing this down if you tend to speak quickly. As you slow down your speech you may want to think about how you can convey a message through your tone of voice, facial expressions or hand gestures.



## Play

The focus in The Treasure We Seek approach is on playing around with different ways of engaging. While the person may not fully understand the meaning of what you say they may enjoy seeing you playing around with words you use. For example singing a short sentence instead of speaking it, saying hello in a different language, using words from the past that are less common now.



## Questions

Try to use questions sparingly. Perhaps use other ways of exploring what the person is feeling and thinking – we share some ideas for this below.



## Pause

After you have said something, take a pause break to let your family member/friend hear and digest what you said. You may need to experiment with what works best in terms of length of pause.

## What's Involved in Tuning in to Others

The steps involved in Tuning in to Others are:

- 1) Noticing & Acknowledging
- 2) Naming & Accompanying

We suggest that you:

- Read all the text below before your online visit.
- Have a copy of this sheet, or access to an online version near you as a reminder of what each of the ideas is inviting you to do.
- Do as much or as little of what the ideas suggest as feels right for you
- Hold lightly any set ideas of what you think should or might happen, and see where it leads if you focus on responding to what you are picking up from your family member/friend

These steps have been inspired by the work of Elderflowers who are therapeutic arts practitioners who work with people with advanced dementia. For more about the Elderflowers visit [www.heartminds.org.uk](http://www.heartminds.org.uk).

## 1) Noticing and Acknowledging

In these first steps you are being invited to pick up on what might be happening within and around the person you are visiting.



There may be a lot going on in your own head and heart at the beginning of the visit – are there techniques like noticing your breathing, putting your feet flat on the floor, counting to 10 or feeling your back against the chair that could help you in the first few minutes of the visit?



Can you take a few moments to notice 1 or 2 things from the list below of in relation to your family member/friend:

- Body language and facial expressions.
- Tone of voice or other sounds.
- Appearance- hair, accessories, what they are wearing.
- Physical & sensory environment- objects, pictures, people, noises, window that you can see.
- Any differences in how your family member/friend is now compared to when you last saw them.
- Anything in the environment that might be helpful/unhelpful during the visit.

## 1) Noticing and Acknowledging (cont...)



If there is a member of staff supporting your family member/friend during the visit, you might want to check-in with them if there is anything they would like to share that may have relevance to your visit.



Make a mental note of a couple of things you noticed and would like to acknowledge. These things can be brought into the Naming and Accompanying ideas below.

## 2) Naming & Accompanying

The focus of Naming and Accompanying is to offer a springboard for further engagement and connection with your family member/friend.

Remind yourself of one or two things you noticed about your family member/friend. What ways could you use what you've noticed as a way to explore ways of being with them?

Below we've shared a range of ideas which you may use to build on what you noticed. You may want to try something from this list too. Dip into these ideas at your own pace and see if there is one or two that feel interesting to try out.

### NAMING



#### A Focus on Hello

Giving time and attention to your hello



#### Tapping in to how the person is feeling

Noticing things about them that might suggest how they are feeling and having a go at naming how you sense they are.

### ACOMPANYING

For example, saying hello in different languages, combining your hello with music, paying special attention to saying the person's name.

For example, rather than asking questions (where the person might feel under pressure to answer) you might say something like 'your eyes are closing, you seem a bit tired' You could take this further naming and being with the person in how they are feeling by showing what you would do if you were tired, for example resting your head in your hands.

## NAMING



### Seizing Opportunities for Compliments and Celebrations

Being really attentive to finding something about the person to celebrate or compliment them on.



### Acknowledging what is Happening in the Environment

Naming what you see and hear going on in the person's environment as a way of acknowledging what might be distracting them.



### Saying yes to their reality

Recognising the importance to them of what they are talking about, even if what they are saying may not be 'true' or immediately possible.



### Looking out for interest & energy and building on it

Carrying a curiosity during the visit to see if there are any moments, however brief, you can identify where your family member/friend appears to show interest or energy.

## ACOMPANYING

For example, compliment them on what they are wearing mentioning specific detail 'I really like your green top'. You could make it very personal to them by saying their name when you give the compliment and adding that 'the top makes your eyes shine'.

For example, you could lean forward to look closely to show interest in what they are looking at. You could build on what is happening, for example if someone else is coming in to the room you may want to say hello to them.

For example, if the person is saying they want to go shopping, rather than saying this isn't possible you may ask more about what they need to buy, where the best bargains are, who they might meet.

For example, if the person seems to have a glimmer of a smile when you smile, making your smile even bigger and telling them how it feels to see them smile.

## Some Small Treasures

Make a note of what was happening within and around the person you are visiting, how you built on this and anything you noticed as a result of trying this out.

Is there one small treasure, a moment or feeling – however small or brief – that you would like to hold on to from the visit? Perhaps tell others about? If something comes to mind write it down, to keep it as part of the Treasure Chest you are creating here.

