

Call&Care

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**Do not take
your own
Agenda**

It is very easy to assume that what you are pre-occupied with will be the same for everyone.

This is not necessarily true.

Contacting people to give them a chance to have human contact and a chance to talk does not mean that the subject of the call is necessarily going to be about the things you expect.

There is nothing wrong with a call if the current crisis does not feature in it at all any more than if you call a person who you know has a longstanding health or mental health issue and this is not referred to in the conversation.

You might think the person is in denial and needs to face reality, but in a world continuously reporting news to the point many have started to ration the amount they listen to for self-protection, a telephone call which does not refer to the news may give a chance for sanctuary or solace in an ever-changing, tumultuous world.

The person, not you, is to choose the subject of the call!

People are likely to want to talk about family, friends, grandchildren, pets. All the normal parts of life.

Do not be surprised if small items become focused upon. These may be the things that the person is leaning on as foundations in the world in which they live.

Some things are particularly meaningful to them with a higher focus than might otherwise be expected

This can be particularly be the case if they have suffered a bereavement and the loss of a life partner.

Often things take on a greater significance at such times.

These may be daily routines, the crossword, the newspaper, or listening to a particular programme.

Any disruption to this can be unsettling, so be careful to call at a suitable time.

Furthermore, if the person has an element of short-term memory loss, then they will have a strong reliance on routine, predictability and structure.

The slightest change can be unsettling – for example if the newspaper or milk delivery is interrupted for any reason.

Expect a range of experiences, perspectives and emotions across the calls.

Take each call as it comes and each person as an individual, with respect for their reactions and responses to their experiences.

You may end up with a number of seemingly similar calls but the key is to listen to the individuality in each and understand the person and their perspective on life.

It is not always what is said, but sometimes the things that are not said, that are important.

It is important to be kind, gentle and supportive.

Having said that, it is also possible that somewhat strong views can be expressed and this could take you by surprise.

Or perhaps a person's mental health condition may lead to an unusual type of conversation.

So prepare yourself.

Expect the unexpected.

It is important to be unshockable and non-judgemental.

You do not have to agree with or condone all the views you hear.

However, people really need to have a chance to express how they are feeling.

It is important that the person is given acceptance of themselves even if their comments are more challenging than any you might express.

At times it can be important to enable the person to talk to God about how they feel – using their own words.

Do not worry, God is more than capable of hearing whatever they feel they need to say to him, including expressing strong emotions.

You do not need to protect God.

Sometimes calls will be on one subject.

At other times they will flit from subject to subject.

Others may be rambling or disjointed.

There is no right or wrong call.

Take them as they come.

Ask God to give you the ability to listen and the wisdom to know what to say and how to respond including when to just let the person speak.