



## Volunteer Script

### Before you say hello:

- Reflect: Think for a moment about a time when you found yourself feeling overwhelmed and in need of help. Think about what you really needed in that situation and what would have helped. Think about the type of person that you would have wanted help from in that situation, and what they would have done/said. Think of key things about the helper and the situation that you would have found helpful, and keep these things in mind when dealing with a participant.
- Reflect: Think for a moment about a time when you found yourself feeling as if there was no solution to a problem. Think about if you found someone to talk it over with, but you were frustrated with the exchange. Think about what might have gone wrong in the interaction and what may have been more helpful.
- Prepare yourself for the interaction:
  - Clear your mind and relax. Prepare to listen.
  - Direct your attention to understanding the participant and their needs.
  - Let go of your own preoccupations and be fully aware of the participant's situation.
  - Let go of preconceived ideas or solutions.

### Initial contact:

- Make arrangements for a meeting (phone or in person), so that you can give them your full attention and provide resources.
- Goals of initial contact:
  - Build a connection and establish rapport.
  - Clarify who you are and how you will work together.
  - Seek a clear definition of the most pressing problem(s).
  - Plan the next step.

### Active listening:

- Look and listen: look at the participant, and notice comfortable eye contact. What is comfortable for them? For you?
- Show interest: let the participant know that you are listening.
- Get out from behind the desk: turn off cell phones and all other distractions.
- Draw the participant out with simple questions: "Do you mean...", "Will you tell me more about that?", "What was it all about?", "Was there anything else?", "It sounds like..."
- Be aware of your responses as you listen: are things making sense?
- Be aware of your lens and how you are feeling: Are these feelings yours? Are they indications of what the other person is feeling or experiencing? Are you uncomfortable? Angry, sad, confused? Are you feeling this way, or are you picking up the participants emotions?

- Interrupt less, listen more: Wait for a pause before reflecting back.
- Listen, do not tell: Advise less and understand more. Advice may be interpreted negatively.
- Acknowledge what you have heard by reflecting back after the response to your questions. Paraphrase what the person has said and allow them to correct you.

### **Clarifying the problem:**

Ask questions that will help you understand the issues and what led the participant to ask for help.

- "Of all the things we have talked about today, what is the thing bothering you the most?"
- "What steps have you taken to try and resolve the problem?"
- "What happened?"
- "What worked in the past? Can you give me an example?"
- "What did not work?"
- "If things were better in your life, what would it look/feel like? What would be different?"
- "What is working in your life right now?"
- "What is not working in your life right now?"
- "What led to this situation?"
- "Of the things that are not going well in your life, which is the most important?"
- "What is the most important issue for you to focus on right now?"
- "What do you think the next step is for you?"
- "How would others describe your situation? Do you see it in the same way?"

### **Identify clear steps:**

- "What can I do to support you?"
- "What could you do this week that would help reduce stress at home/work?"
- "By the end of this week/next week/the month what will you have done to improve the situation?"
- "Would you be interested in attending any local support groups?" (Offer to accompany)
- "Would you be interested in learning more about professional support services in the community?" (Ex. Counselling, rehab facilities)
- "Are there any other tools that I can provide you with to help your situation?"