

# PsychAGE News

Information and commentary about older adult and carer wellbeing

## Issue 20, 16th February, 2020: 'Holding the Space for Age'

This is the 20th issue! Fits nicely with a 2020 thing :)

So what does it mean to 'hold the space for age'? First I'd like you to consider a quote by social commentator and mindfulness expert Eckert Tolle:

"Why is old considered useless? Because in old age, the emphasis shifts from doing to Being, and our civilization, which is lost in doing, knows nothing of Being. It asks: Being? What do you do with it?"

This is how I think we can hold the space for age:



1. We consider the value of our Being with older adults, our presence, and not just what we do with them or for them.
2. We consciously deal with any recoil we might have about old age or what the person before us is distressed about. We don't unwittingly silence them just because we are distressed about the distress. We aim to notice our distress and put it to one side to deal with later.
3. We offer opportunities for them to acknowledge changes to their doing and functioning.
4. We create space for them to grieve if needed and use reflective listening skills to sit with them in this distress versus deflecting or challenging it.
5. We acknowledge the added complexities around how loss of doing or function can impact on identity especially in a world that prizes productivity and achievement.
6. We acknowledge that death and decline is a natural life trajectory and not a sign of failure.
7. We seek to be literate and learn about any generational nuances that might prevent older adults from engaging in a service and aim to preserve their dignity as much as possible.
8. We let them define things for themselves—even if it is not how we would define it.
9. We give them choice in what level of risk they want to take in navigating end of life.
10. We seek to honour their Being by offering opportunities to identify core aspects of their self that can exist, even up until their last breath, unaffected by a body that can no longer Do.

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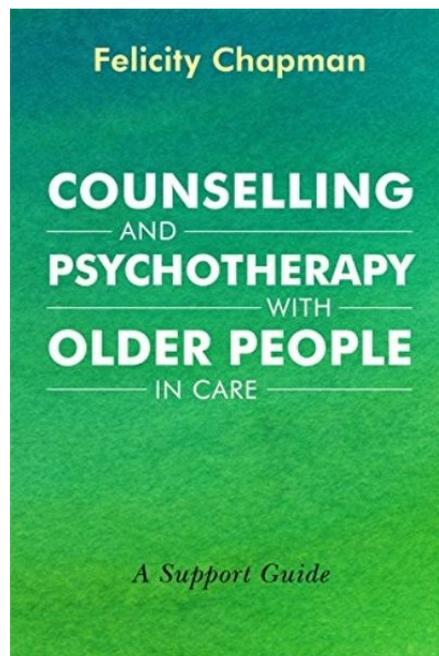


Felicity Chapman  
Accredited Mental Health Social Worker  
Author of *Counselling and Psychotherapy with Older People in Care* (JKP, 2018)

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See subsequent pages for the Table of Contents.



# PsychAGE News

Information and commentary about older adult and carer wellbeing

## Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

*The Perfect Storm*

*Incidences of distress*

*Our ageing population*

*Shortage of worker interest & expertise*

*Same Ripple, Different Ponds*

*A Special Breed of Senior*

*A Disclaimer*

PART 1: THE CONTEXT

**Residential Living**

*Building Trust with Staff*

*Who is Your Client?*

*Negotiating the Space*

*The organizational-political space*

*The physical space*

*Collaboration is Key*

*Personal Reflection*

**Barriers to Engagement**

*The Referral Context*

*Resident Unfamiliarity & Wariness*

*'The Lucky Generation'*

*Martians, counsellors, all the same*

*Can they trust you (really?)*

*Positive Psychology?*

*Personal Reflection*

**Types of Distress**

*Physical*

*Neurological*

*Social or Spiritual*

*Psychological*

*Environmental or Lifestyle*

*Personal Reflection*

# PsychAGE News

Information and commentary about older adult and carer wellbeing

## PART 2: INTERVENTION

### **The Moving Wheel of Assessment**

*The Mental Health and Neurological Spectrum*  
*Determining Suitability and Whose Problem It Is*  
*Informal Assessment*  
*Formal Assessment*  
*The Mini Mental State Examination*  
*The Emotion Thermometers Tool*  
*The Geriatric Depression Scale*  
*The Intake Form*  
*Senior-friendly measures in formal assessment*  
*Senior-friendly approaches in formal assessment*  
*Personal Reflection*

### **Invitations for Engagement**

*The Missing Jigsaw Piece*  
*Undercover Agents*  
*The Life Story Interview*  
*Personal Reflection*

### **Types of Engagement**

*Issue-Specific Interventions*  
*Grief and loss*  
*Readiness to die*  
*Experiences of pain and stress*  
*Complex childhood trauma and PTSD*  
*Multimodal Interventions*  
*Acceptance Commitment Therapy & Mindfulness-Based Interventions*  
*Cognitive Behavioural Therapy*  
*Interpersonal Therapy*  
*Narrative Therapy*  
*Reminiscence Therapy and Life Review*  
*An Integrated Model for Intervention*  
*Formal engagement*  
*Informal or foundational engagement*  
*Personal Reflection*

# PsychAGE News

Information and commentary about older adult and carer wellbeing

## PART 3: THE BIGGER PICTURE

### **Caring for You the Psychotherapist**

*The Mickey Mouse Mindset*

*Buttons & Formal Supervision*

*Transference and countertransference*

*The constancy of death and decline*

*Managing your own distress*

*Compassion Satisfaction*

*Dealing with Frustrations and Disillusions*

*Personal Reflection*

### **Disempowering Attitudes**

*Urgh!*

*'O' is for Obsolete*

*It's Not Worth It*

*What Do You Expect?*

*Where's the Progression?*

*Personal Reflection*

### **Being Senior-Friendly Care Systems**

*Empowerment or Dependency?*

*Therapist need*

*Perpetuating a "needy" context*

*Insatiable need*

*Relevant Programmes of Specialist Care*

*Initial engagement approach*

*Formal intervention and relationship*

*Internal programme contexts*

*External socio-political contexts*

*Accessibility All Round*

*Privates rebates that appreciate complexity*

*Models of training and practice not dominated by clinical psychology*

*Services free from requiring a mental health care plan*

*Active attempts to offset internalized ageism*

*Consult below and advocate up*

*Bring Sexy Back!*

*Summary*

APPENDICES

DEFINITIONS

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES