

# 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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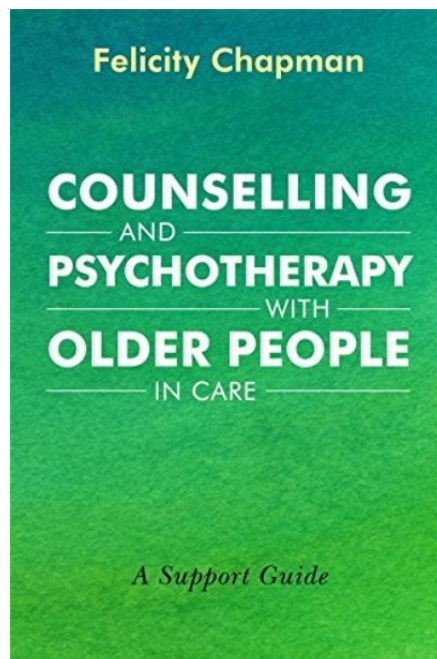


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