

FOUR ELEMENTS of a KEEP SAFE PLAN

If relevant and necessary, remove means to increase safety

#1 Practical help to alleviate immediate need

- It may not be possible to solve the entire need or problem but there is usually something that can be done to make things a little easier.
- Break it down to the most challenging element for them and see if you can do something toward helping with that
- A discussion around the future possibilities of change and deliberate ‘hope-building’ decisions/plans
- What sort of practical help can they be connected with to address their most immediate pain/need?
- This process helps them to see that rather than looking at the overwhelming big picture, if they break it down into smaller elements or issues, very often perspective shifts and one step at a time things can change

Even something small can make a big difference!

#2 Connection to more formal support or resource

- An agreement and arrangement to connect with a longer-term caregiver
- Provide a physical list of other options especially for the middle of the night if that is a tough time for them
- If necessary, help make appointments, phone calls etc
- Enquire about their ability to get to the appointment and if they need assistance with that
- If for some reason one resource doesn’t work or suit, try another and communicate to the person that together you will continue to try until you find something that works

Knowing there is someone to talk to whenever needed is critical!

#3 ‘Best Life’ exercise and agreement to repeat daily

- Have them describe their best self/best life/best job/best relationship etc (whatever is relevant to their current struggle) in vivid detail
- Ask questions to encourage clarified detail and more imagination
- Once you are happy with the picture being described, ask them to repeat the process daily for 10 minutes, progressively building on their vision
- If they can do this each day they will discover they have increased their hope, optimism and happiness

Having a positive vision is vital for life to succeed!

#4 List of Self Care activities

- Explore the various Self Care activities they can do to help themselves destress and relax
- Consider atmosphere, music, food, comfort, company, massage etc
- Talk about the importance of self-care to empower them to get through the tough times
- Enquire if it is desired to have the self-care ideas written down and stuck on the fridge so that they can be referred to when things build up and they feel unsafe

THE POWER of HOPE

- Hope is directly related to our sense of possibility and is not the same as happiness or optimism. It is what we feel when we think that life is worth living or that our work is worth doing.
- Hope answers the question, “Why bother?”
- Doctors know that hope affects our ability to heal and without it you lack energy to engage with life.
- Hope has to be real and anchored on something tangible.
- Hope breeds hope so if we can communicate *our* hope in real practical terms that is contagious
- Hope engages our problem-solving skills and is therefore critical when we are really struggling.
- Hope is about “Progress, not perfection.”
- So, look for ways to make hopefulness tangible. Don’t let it be just something for the future i.e. a single mum struggling with her kids – maybe you can work to finding some respite for a time etc
- Allowing someone to give voice to both the part of them that is hopeless and the hopeful part that is telling you about it without the agenda of “getting rid of” any part, typically leads to a softening of the “scary” part and helps to increase self-compassion and gratitude, which also increases a sense of hope!
- Many people try to rally hope by pretending that things aren’t so bad. But they don’t really believe it because they ‘know’ that they are lying to themselves.
- Instead, they can find hope in learning to accept what is – their outward struggles and their inner flaws. Accepting their limitations and imperfections – which are part of being human – might seem, at first, self-defeating. But it can offer just the opposite... a route out of hopelessness and into a more positive, hopeful perspective.
- And - **This process of developing a ‘keep safe plan’ has the capacity to build hope in and of itself.**

References:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-science-behind-behavior/201608/simple-exercise-boost-optimism-and-improve-health>

