

Supporting a Loved One in Difficult Times (*Interview Transcripts*)

Joseph Siegel, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, OSF HealthCare

“I think the first thing to do is to be present. And that sound so easy, but we live in a world of distraction. When someone needs you to be there, it’s important to have good eye contact. You’re not looking at your phone. You’re engaged with what they are saying. You’re understanding what they are saying and you are interacting with it. You are asking open-ended questions to increase your understanding and show that you are really interested in what they are saying.” (:34)

Joseph Siegel, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, OSF HealthCare

“You’re there to listen. Sometimes what can get in the way of that is advice giving. This person is struggling, so our natural tendency is ask if they have tried something or another thing. Many times, a person just needs an attentive listener.” (:26)

Joseph Siegel, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, OSF HealthCare

“Try to put yourself in their shoes. Try to have empathy. But also, try to anticipate needs. Often this person is unable to really form a good understanding of what they might need in that moment. It can be something that’s super simple like rubbing their back, or more complex like taking their kids to school.” (:26)

Joseph Siegel, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, OSF HealthCare

“I think it’s also important not to stay completely focused on or dwell on that issue. People have rich, complicated lives and when we start reducing their life to this one problem or this one issue, it can become a real drag on their emotional health. So even though you are helping with this one thing, don’t forget to include everything else about them.” (:27)

Joseph Siegel, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, OSF HealthCare

“I would recommend it early on in any of these situations, but I would also bring it up in terms of your own experience with these helping professionals. I definitely would not put it in terms of ‘you should’ or ‘you could’ or ‘have you considered?’ Mention it as an option. Let them know it could be helpful or share how your experience was and how you found it to be helpful for you.”