



BEFRIENDER
MINISTRY

A Listening Presence

Foundation Principles

- God is present
- Caring not curing
- Nonjudgmental presence
- Active listening

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How Does BeFriender Ministry Make a Difference?

Caring Not Curing: One Leader's Story

By Vicki Haugen

In sharing my passion for BeFriender Ministry in our training courses, I am often asked “how do you stick to “caring not curing?” Most of us want to help and fix and make it all better. So, I always tell my most memorable story from my early BeFriender days.

I went to see “Mary” every week or so at first. She resided in a care facility due to failing physical strength and some early problems with memory loss. In our first months together, she was delighted to have a caring presence and to share her concerns as well as her memories of life in church. I found her stories compelling and felt honored to offer “caring, not curing.”

After some time, she began to fail, but she remembered me and seemed to enjoy our visits even though our interactions were much less focused on current life, rather on her memories.

After some more time she lost her ability to speak. I wondered if I should continue my visits, yet she seemed to know me. So, I went at dinner time as the staff said she ate better when she had company. I didn't alter her end-of-life trajectory, but I could continue to offer a genuine caring that I felt deeply.

Nearer to the end of her life, I was just sitting next to her on our visits. She didn't seem to notice me at first, but after about 5 minutes she would lean over and put her head on my shoulder and just rest there for 20 minutes. When she sat up, I would leave. I don't know if she knew I had been there even 5 minutes later, but I knew she felt God's love though me while we sat together.

What a gift to me to CARE for such a dear soul. No curing, but the gift of caring.



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