

Personal Support Worker Series

Personal Support Workers and Challenging Conversations

Questions & Answers

Date: August 19th, 2021, from 12-1pm ET

The following questions were asked during the session. Answers were provided by:
 Amy Archer, Diane Roscoe and Tracey Human

Question	Answer
<p><i>If your told by the family to not tell them they are dying... What are we, as PSW, supposed to do?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">&</p> <p><i>Is it within our scope as PSW's to answer the question-- if they are dying or not?</i></p>	<p><i>Amy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You as PSWs are there to bear witness to walk the journey with compassion. There is so much we need to unpack of why they don't want us to tell them. What do you tell them? Do you tell them the truth? These are questions that are often left unexplored. And we will either say: we have to respect their culture or their family. And we've left those conversations unpacked. But if we lean in to ask the questions about what their hesitation is about telling them/why you not want them to know. Oftentimes, they think that the individual themselves don't know. But they really know what's going on in their body. So, I would walk that journey alongside them and ask those questions and listening to why they are afraid or hesitant or want to refrain from sharing that information and walk that journey with them. <p><i>Tracey:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would echo what Amy has said. From a PSW standpoint, your role is to acknowledge that they don't want their loved one to know and then report that up so it can be handed over to the physician, nurse practitioner, nurse or social worker. Very often within those conversations, some other questions come up related to disease and trajectory and how things will be handled, coordination and medication. So, you want the physician, nurse practitioner, nurse or social worker responding to those questions in a timely manner. What we will often do in those moments as we are exploring further with the family is culture and tradition as well.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That being said, I've never met anybody, child or adult that didn't understand the gravity of their situation and how ill they were. When somebody's body is shutting down, it's not a surprise to them and they know it. Very often when they ask us questions, they are testing us to know who they can rely on and be vulnerable with. <p><i>Diane:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to reiterate the fact that most people know that their body is shutting down and that they are very ill. As a nurse, I have asked the client questions like "what is your understanding of what's happening right now and your illness"? And often times they would say quite clearly that they knew that they were dying. It is not in the PSW's role to dispel that but as Tracy has said, you must bring in your most responsible report or leader. Immediately report it up, don't leave it for another day and try to report it directly to somebody rather than using technology.
<p><i>I was at a client yesterday he is at the end of his journey; his 2 sons have been there all along being able to process as things have progressed. The daughter has come from a long distance and is just realizing what's happening and asking me many questions the son yesterday told me to ignore her she's upsetting everyone. What can I say to get the brothers to let her process her grief?</i></p>	<p><i>Amy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great question. I think a gentle reminder to them that this is newer for her and perhaps she can have time aside with you to ask questions and maybe a time with the RN or physician would benefit her.