MEMORY PROJECT

# *GROUP ACTIVITY: Your Turn My Turn - a helpful way to give and receive support*

**Background information for the trainer/ workshop leader to explain to members of the group.**
Many people come along to the Memory Project workshops because they hope it will solve all their family problems. But sometimes the workshops raise more questions than they answer. In fact group members are sometimes left feeling they will never manage to sort out their lives and make things better for their children.

But over the years members of the groups have realised that the workshops are just the beginning of the process. The next step, to USE the new ideas and take control of their lives, is up to them.

Gradually some good ideas have grown up including simple ways to help each other to keep working on difficult decisions and making big changes. One of these ideas is ***Your Turn – My Turn.*** This is a way to make space for talking and listening with a trusted friend. People who manage to do this regularly find that it helps them to cope better with the pressures and problems of daily life. Whatever problems come along they know it there will soon be a time when they can offload their fears and frustrations. ***Your Turn – My Turn*** is explained below.

Another idea is to write down an Action Plan covering the most important and urgent tasks which have to be faced. This is described in a separate information sheet at the end of Topic 4/E.

People who manage to put these two ideas together often find themselves moving forward.

**Your Turn – My turn explained.**
***Your turn – My turn*** is a way for two people who have similar problems to give each other a listening ear. They become Talking and Listening Partners who agree to meet on a regular basis, taking it in turns to talk and listen to each other.

Most of us have problems finding the right time and place to talk about the things that are really important to us. We don't want to make demands on people who have worries of their own. So we pass in the road, both with our heavy burdens of worries and fears. We keep missing the opportunity to "share the load."

But how would it feel if we could find the right person, a reliable friend, to be our ***Talking and Listening Partner?*** Could it really help to share our worries and support each other to work on problems which keep us awake at night?

The experience of parents who have already tried this idea is that they soon begin to feel stronger, more in charge of their lives. They get through each day more easily because they know another support session will be coming up soon. Instead of sinking under the weight of problems, they begin to work out with their partner how to tackle one thing at a time. Another good outcome is that the give and take of listening and sharing ideas on a regular basis benefits both partners – so they can both feel satisfied that they are really helping someone else.

If this simple arrangement can really help - how can we get going?

**Trying out Your turn – My turn in the workshop.**

The trainer/workshop leader will explain the ideas given above and give the following guidance on trying out the system:

- Members of the group who want to take part are invited to choose a talking/ listening partner from among those present. (This may not be their permanent partner, its just a way of trying out the system.)

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- They move to a quiet spot in the room or compound and each person has ten minutes to talk about whatever is on her mind.

- Its important to warn everyone that at this stage they should not share information that they want to keep confidential. (Later on, if they decide to try the system for real, they can decide exactly what to share.)

- The listener encourages and responds but does NOT interrupt with her own problems at this stage.

- After ten minutes they swap over, so the Listener becomes the talker, with her own chance to explain her problems.

- After 20 minutes the group comes together. The trainer must emphasise that there will be absolutely no feedback on personal information.

- Explain that people will be invited to share their view on general questions which will help other members of the group to think if this is something they want to try.

- Possible areas for feedback/discussion include:
  - ✦ From this brief experience is it likely to be a good way to give and get support?
  - ✦ How would you find the right person that you can trust with your personal information?
  - ✦ How could you make time to meet and talk?
  - ✦ Would it be important to have a regular time and place to meet?
  - ✦ What happens if the partners cant keep to the right balance of talking and listening?

- Finally it is suggested that anyone who plans to try this support system should follow simple ground rules. Copies of page 3 to be given to anyone wanting to try out the ideas.

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## Ground Rules.

If you decide to try out Your Turn – My Turn please keep these ideas in mind:

- When you find a Talking and Listening Partner make a firm promise to each other that whatever you share is strictly confidential.
- Decide on a trial period – say 4 meetings – to give both of you a chance to see if this system suits you and whether you can both keep to the agreed times.
- Decide on a time to meet that's convenient for you both, for example just after children have gone to school or just after church?
- Work out how often you will meet. Don't be too ambitious because you don't want to let each other down.
- Decide how much time you can both spare – for example a total of 40 minutes giving each person 20 minutes to talk. When you see how it goes you can increase or decrease the time.
- Decide on a place to meet that's easy for you both and where you have privacy to talk.
- If both partners have written Action Plans, this might form a good basis for discussion.
- Decide in advance to review the "experiment" after the agreed trial period. Be prepared to be honest if you don't think its working well enough.