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 people who have attended the workshops realise that this is just the beginning of the process. The next step is to USE the new ideas and take control of their own lives. This part 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 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 the next part of the Resources Section.

People who manage to put these two ideas together often find they are able to keep moving forward, focusing on the things they know they have to get on with.

Your Turn – My turn explained.
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?

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

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 out the system for real, they can decide exactly what to share.)

- They agree who will talk and who will listen first. 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 groups comes back together. The workshop leader must emphasise that there will be absolutely no sharing of personal information, but that this is an opportunity to talk in a general way about how the talking and listening felt and any ideas which will help other members of the group decide 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?
  - Would it be important to fix a regular time and place to meet?
  - Would it be important to have a regular time and place to meet?
  - Everyone is too busy - how could you find time in make time to meet and talk regularly?
  - What happens if the partners cant keep to the right balance of talking and listening?

- Would it help to start off by writing down some “ground rules”? Ideas for Ground Rules are given on the next page. These are just ideas; each pair of talking and listening partners can work out how they want to work together.

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Ground Rules.

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

- 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 or 5 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 that's convenient to you both, for example just after the children have gone to school or just before or 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 each spare – for example a total of 40 minutes would give 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 without too many interruptions!
- If both partners have Actions Plans, or are planning to write Action Plans, these might be a good basis for discussion.
- Decide in advance to review this "experiment" after the agreed trial period. Be prepared to be honest with each other if you don't think its working well enough.