

Questions to consider when approaching work with a client approaching the end of life.

This is not an exhaustive list but can be helpful in thinking about how the person you are speaking with might be experiencing this time of their lives, and might enable you to identify ways of working with them on what's important for them.

1. **What are they hoping to get out of attending therapy at this time?** Is there something in particular they are looking to work on, make sense of or process?
2. **What is the capacity that they have for therapy at the moment?** Consider how they might be functioning and feeling physically, what their cognitive capacity might be (in the context of being physically unwell) and how medications or other concerns might impact on this.
3. **What is happening for them physically at the moment?** Is this getting in the way of what is important for them? Is this causing worry, distress or impacting on the ways that they are able to engage with life?
4. **At this time, what is important to them?** This is the time when people can often identify values readily, but may struggle to identify daily processes/activities that are within their capacity that are aligned with what is important.
5. **What are they doing at the moment, and how is this impacted by the physical things that are happening for them?** Is this in line with how they want to be spending their time? Are they able to connect with things that feel meaningful and important? Are there things that they want to be doing that they are not able to do in the context of their situation?
6. **What are the kinds of things that are showing up emotionally for them – are these emotions familiar, new, and/or do they feel overwhelmed or distressed by them?** Are they trying to avoid these by distraction/keeping busy/not allowing them to think about their situation, or are they numbing themselves out using medications or other things, or are they approaching the emotions with acceptance (this might be in being able to naming and accepting of grief etc).
7. **What is showing up in their thoughts at the moment and how are they thinking about their situation?** Are they putting pressure on themselves to be positive, or accepting, or are they allowing their thoughts to arrive with curiosity?
8. **What are they actively trying to avoid?** What is the cost of the avoidance, on their time, their energy, relationships or other aspects of their experience?