



Hints and Tips for Buddies to help have Positive Conversations

Part of your Buddy role is to listen and talk to the caller as a fellow 41er and a friend. This document includes some suggested conversation topics and suggested activities for 41 Club Buddies supporting lonely or isolated individuals.

They are only a framework – you will have your own way of talking and can adopt the following suggestions.

If your caller has internet connectivity you might like to suggest support links from the Buddy Resources Page – these will be added and accessible as the service is developed.

Similarly, you might suggest the telephone numbers of National support organisations who could inform the caller of local support groups.

Callers should be encouraged to reach out to these or friends or family for themselves if possible. It will not normally be easy for Buddies to do this for the caller.

Suggested welcome prompts whenever you answer a Buddyline call:

“Hello, thanks for contacting the 41 Club Buddyline – my name is <Buddy’s name> do you mind telling me your name?”

“Hello <caller name> I’m your 41 Club Buddy and I’m really pleased you’ve phoned - I’m here to listen to you. How are you doing today / what’s on your mind?”

Suggested topics for discussion

41 Club & Round Table

Which 41 Club are / were they a member of? What Round Table were they in?

What local events have they enjoyed doing in the past with their Club?

Did they used to attend National Conferences? Which ones and where? What did they enjoy about those events?

Are they still a member with their 41 Club? Have they kept in touch with other members? If not why do they think that is?

Has their Club met during this year? Have they tried to contact others?

Would they like you to help them get in touch/reconnect with their local Club?

Family

Do they have family? Ask them to tell you about them if they don’t mind.

Do they keep in touch with their family? If not why is that?

Are they local? Moved away?



Ask how they may might reach out to their family

Television / Radio:

What is their favourite TV/Radio programmes?

Do they prefer Dramas / Soaps / Sport / News / Nature documentaries / Quizzes / Gardening / DIY? Which ones and why?

What has been their most recent favourite programme and why?

When do they tend to watch TV? Morning, lunchtime, afternoon or evening?

What's on this evening? Will you be watching it?

Music:

What type of music do they prefer?

Favourite groups / artists? What would they say is their best album / song?

Ever seen them live? If so where or when?

Sport:

What sport did they / do they enjoy?

Do they have a favourite team? Did they used to watch them live? Best player in their opinion?

Do they have a favourite sportsman/woman?

Books:

Do they enjoy reading? Newspapers / magazines / books?

Favourite books / authors?

Travel:

What has been their favourite holiday destination? Why is that?

Do they have a special memory about a destination?

Food:

What is their favourite type of food? Which nationality?

What is/was their favourite restaurant?

Do they have a special memory about a restaurant?

Hobbies/Interests:

What are their hobbies? E.g. Gardening – do they have one? Favourite flowers?

How did they get into them or start? What is it that they like? How serious did they get into them?

Do they still do these? Why is that? Do they know a local interest group they could join?



For all of the above, it may help if the Buddy suggests how the caller might re-engage with any of the subjects.

Other general topics to ask about

Where are you at the moment? (Living room, kitchen, hallway, etc.)

What can you see? (Pictures, ornaments, a view out the window)

Is there an object or photo in your room you can tell me about?

Are you near a window?

What can you see from the window?

Can you see any signs of the seasons?

Can you hear the birds?

What's your favourite season? Why?

What are you going to do now?

(Share what you plan to do next, for example, 'I think I might have a cup of tea...')

Share an encouragement or good news story you have heard, perhaps about neighbourhoods pulling together and helping one another

Cover the Basics

In any call, it may also be important just to check some welfare aspects such as:

- Do they have a supply of food and general house supplies?
- Are they eating well?
- Do they have enough supply of their regular medication? How are they getting these?
- Do they have neighbours checking on them?
- How are they feeling during this pandemic?
- Suggest having a structure/routine, trying to keep mealtimes and a sleep pattern

During the call

- The most important thing is to be present during your phone call. If possible, minimise background noise, which could be a distraction, either for you or your caller.
- Have a piece of paper to hand to make a note of anything that comes up that you might forget after the call.
- Length of the call



There is no right or wrong length but 30 minutes is suggested as a guideline time. Play it by ear, keeping in mind that a person's energy levels may be different at different times of the day, and from one day to another.

- I feel like I'm talking a lot, and the conversation is drying up.

You may find that your conversation comes to a natural end after 15 minutes or less, even if you have made a note of possible topics of conversation. That's OK. It's more important to let someone know you are thinking of them and glad to be in touch with them than staying on the line in awkward silence.

- I can barely get a word in!

You may find that having a listening ear is all a person needs, and they are keener to chat than to hear from you. This is understandable, especially if you are the only person they have spoken to for a while. It might be worth making a note of the topics your caller especially enjoys talking about in case you talk to them again.

- What happens if my caller gets anxious or upset during the call?

We all have good days and bad days. If your caller shares how they are feeling, the most important thing is to listen and not dismiss their emotions. Rather than straightaway trying to distract a person from feeling low, acknowledge how they are feeling, before gently introducing a different topic of conversation.

- What happens if my caller asks for something, I'm not able to help with or I don't know the answer?

Anything you're not sure about, share that with your caller and if you are happy to, let them know you will check and get back to them. A simple, 'I'm not sure about that, but I'll do my best to find out' should reassure someone that you have listened to their questions and concerns and you will try to find an answer.

Ending the call

- Finish on a positive note and use the caller's name when you say goodbye. It may seem like a small thing, but it can mean a lot.
- "I've really enjoyed speaking with you"..

After the call

- Take a moment to reflect on how you feel the call went.
- What did you think went well and you would share with other Buddies?
- What did you think could've gone better and how would you do it differently next time?
- Is there anything urgent that needs escalating regarding the caller's immediate needs for food, medication, or signposting to other services?