

## **“Catch My Eye”**

### **Notes for Facilitators**

#### **Introduction**

This play explores the experience, often reported by visitors to hospital, of trying to find a knowledgeable member of staff from whom they can get information about their loved one. One woman, when describing her failed attempts to catch the attention of staff, summed up her bewilderment by asking “are they trained not to look?” This question became the starting point for the play.

Catch My Eye presents a failure of contact between two worlds.

In one world, a member of staff manages the competing pressures she faces in her working day and the emotions they generate. She has tasks to complete, demands to meet and decisions to make about what the priorities are on her time and attention. She moves between anger, anxiety, relief, joy, concern, fear and sadness. She tries to make sense of what is happening and to justify the choices she makes. It is evident that she is trying to do the best job she can. But her decision-making is pragmatic. She avoids Mrs Laing because she anticipates a difficult, time-consuming conversation. She feels sympathy but is unable to express that effectively by providing the support that is needed. For whatever reason, she does not regard that as a priority for her as she goes about her work.

In another world, Mrs Laing is in the middle of a life transforming, emotionally stressful situation in which her much loved mum is seriously ill. Mrs Laing feels alone and frightened. She struggles to control her anxiety and knows that what she needs is reliable information to help her make sense of (and come to terms with) what is happening. There is no action she can take right now to address the situation other than to find a member of staff to talk to. This task completely absorbs her. When she fails to attract attention she assumes it is her fault.

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The play reveals the inner thoughts of these two people as Mrs Laing tries to catch the nurse’s attention and the nurse tries to avoid being caught.

### **The Resource “Catch My Eye” comprises:**

Audio play (8.5 mins) (available in text format)

### **Suggested Workshop Outline (1hour)**

#### **1. Warm Up: preparing the group (15 mins)**

Before people listen to Catch My Eye it is important to prepare the ground in two ways:

- Firstly, by getting them to think about the themes explored in the play, namely the relationship between the experience of ‘caring’ and the experience of ‘being cared for’ and the desire for, or avoidance of, human contact;
- Secondly, by attuning them to senses other than sight – in particular touch, hearing and smell – to help them to concentrate on the audio they will hear and to notice their responses to it.

The following exercise is designed to prepare the group in these ways. It is adapted from “Look, Listen and Trust: A Framework for Learning Through Drama” (Rawlins & Rich 1985, McMillan Education Ltd).

Often in care situations there is a clear division between the person doing the caring and the person on the receiving end of that care. The exercise **Blind Lead** enables people to experience both sides of this relationship so that the implications for care can be discussed.

In the description below I have included a number of stages to provide increased challenge. Choose how much of this you need to or are able to do (depending on the group and on the time available).

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### Blind Lead

- The group organises itself into pairs identified as A or B. B closes her eyes. A takes B by the arm and leads her round the room, helping her to navigate obstacles and talking quietly to her to draw her attention to any changes in level, temperature, direction, interesting features etc. CHANGE OVER. Once both people have experienced leading and being led, DEBRIEF:
  - a. What was that like?
  - b. What did you notice?
  - c. Which role did you prefer and why?
- Work in pairs as above but this time A does *not* talk to B as they move around the room. Instead, encourage B to explore interesting objects etc with her hands. B tries to remember where A has taken her. CHANGE OVER. Once both people have experienced leading and being led, DEBRIEF:
  - a. What was that like?
  - b. What difference did it make not being able to talk?
  - c. Which role did you prefer and why?
- Work in pairs as above but this time As guide Bs round the room with finger contact only (forefinger to forefinger). The link must not be broken. CHANGE OVER. Once both people have experienced leading and being led, DEBRIEF:
  - a. What was that like?
  - b. What did you notice about the further limitation to your contact?
  - c. Which role did you prefer and why?
- Work in pairs as above but this time A’s exchange partners. So move around the room until the facilitator says STOP. B’s continue to keep their eyes closed while A’s look for another partner. Make this exchange three times (B’s keeping their eyes closed throughout). Before stopping, see if B can guess who their last partner is. Then B’s open their eyes. DEBRIEF. CHANGE OVER. DEBRIEF:
  - a. What was that like?
  - b. What did you notice about the further limitation to your contact?

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c. Which role did you prefer and why?

This exercise helps people focus on their experience of:

- different levels of contact, from close and reassuring to distant and more vulnerable;
- taking responsibility (to lead) vs. trusting that someone will keep them safe (being led);
- as the leader, how to be sensitive to the needs of the person you are leading (without being able to use speech);
- being abandoned and having to wait passively for rescue;
- Being active vs being passive.

**Common points people make:**

**About being led:**

I hated this, I felt scared.

I was really aware of smells and noise.

I felt unsafe when moving from one surface to another (e.g. from carpet to lino).

I was pulling back, not wanting to be led.

I felt safer when my hands were held firmly.

**About being the leader:**

I did not like the fact that I could not check out with my partner whether she was OK.

I was very aware of my responsibility.

**About applying the learning from one experience to the other:**

When I was being led I felt safer when my partner held my hands firmly, so that's what I did when I was being the leader.

**NOTES:**



**2. Listen to Catch My Eye (10 mins)**

Ask the group to sit in silence with their eyes closed. Play the audio. (It is available in text form if required.)

**3. Questions for Discussion (25 mins)**

- What thoughts and feelings did you have in response to this play?
- How does it relate to your own experience as a visitor/patient or as a member of staff?
- How do you know that you’re doing a good job?
- What are the values that underpin your own work/the work of your team/the work of your organisation?
- What would help you live out those values more?

**NOTES:**

**4 Actions (10 mins)**

On the back of these discussions, what ‘little things’ would make a ‘big difference’? How are you going to make these changes?

**NOTES:**

## 5. Evaluation Sheet

Please spend a few minutes answering these questions. This way you will have a record of the impact this work has had. You and your colleagues may then decide how this information should be gathered and used by the service.

What main themes arose during this session?

What did you personally find challenging or surprising?

What did you learn about your team or ward?

What actions were agreed?

How will those be followed up?