

Keeping active and occupied: *Reminiscence*

Activity

Read the following two short stories, in which two older people share very significant but complex memories. Then consider the reflective questions that follow.

Ethel's story

Ethel has been talking about her childhood. She explains that she was the oldest of six children and always had to take care of the little ones 'especially the girls'. She says that her father was often drunk and 'did things he shouldn't'. She then becomes very withdrawn and says she doesn't want to look back on those days as 'it rips open the wounds'.

George's story

George has been talking about his days in the army with some animation and he refers to the 'love of his life'. You ask him if this was when he met his wife. He becomes very emotional and tells you that he had a secret relationship with a soldier for three years. He has continued to have brief relationships with men over the years, but has terrible guilt about not telling his wife and family. When you are preparing a life story book with George, he tells you that Jack, his lover in the army is 'the empty page, worth a 100 pages'. He says that he feels better for sharing this with you.

What might you say to Ethel or George to demonstrate your sensitivity to these emotions? Think of the actual words you might use.

What, if anything, might you need to do in terms of further exploring these emotions and memories with Ethel or George? What other help might you need?