



GRAHAM'S APPROACH

Meet Graham

Dr Graham Kramer has been a GP in Montrose for 16 years. He is seconded for two days a week to the Scottish Government as National Clinical Lead for Self Management and Health Literacy.



What does self management mean for Graham?

In Graham's experience, self management represents a shift in culture from when doctors' training led them to believe they could cure most things with a prescription or a surgical procedure. With self management, for a person living with a long term condition it's no longer a case of **"your life in their hands' but now 'your life in your own hands"**.

For people living with diabetes, for instance, managing their condition is about much more than being prescribed insulin. Success also depends on how well a person looks after themselves, adapts their lifestyle, manages their injections and monitors themselves.

"People's outcomes should become dependent less on their doctors goals and more on their own priorities"

Graham believes that self management is about adopting a relationship change with patients, helping them get involved and be empowered to become lead partners in their own care.

Top Tip: Give people information that they can understand – this is the first step to empowerment. It can be challenging, particularly for people who can't read or write.

"When you get your car MOT'd they give you your carbon monoxide emissions in a traffic lights system; green, yellow, red. That's much more meaningful, much more understandable. Once people can understand, they are much more likely to become involved and if they can see their blood tests are in the green, marvellous. If they're in the amber or red, they can start having a sensible discussion with you about what they can do to improve it."

How does self management fit into Graham's work?

Graham is the lead clinician for diabetes in his practice. Together with the practice nurse, he focuses on the diabetic population, for whom he believes self management is crucial.

"People will only have contact with me or other health professionals for perhaps an hour a year and the rest of the

Top Tip: Take the time to understand what's going on in the lives of people living with long term conditions.

time they're having to look after themselves. How we can support them to self manage and look after themselves is crucial."

Graham thinks that when you've got a very limited window for appointments, it can be very tempting to be 'doctor centred' and take control of the consultation because of the need to time manage and get the required information. In the long run, he feels that it is worthwhile trying to be as person centred as you possibly can by listening and involving the person as much as possible.

"The problem with health professionals is that we try and project our own view of how to run your life based on our knowledge. I think we need to spend more time actually talking to people about what would make life easier for them. We can only really do that by stopping and listening and allowing them to tell us about their lives."

Graham feels showing interest in people empowers them and makes them more able to stick to treatments. **"It may be time consuming to begin with but over time it's a winner."**

How does self management help Graham and his colleagues?

Graham finds self management beneficial because it helps people to be motivated and informed about the condition(s) they are living with.

"They're able to tell me exactly what's worrying them - what's on their mind - and that makes my job a lot easier, tailoring the information that I give to them."

Graham also finds that people who are able to self manage effectively are **"less demanding on the service and they do better, they live well, and tend to avoid complications"**. This means they are less likely to be hospitalised, which is a **"win-win"**.

Top Tip: Support people to monitor their own condition(s) e.g. taking their own blood pressure or blood sugar readings, so that they come to consultations and checkups with some of the information they want to discuss.

Top Tip: Find out what other services are available in the community. A barrier to supporting self management is that doctors often have a poor understanding of and relationships with services in the community. For example, it might be very helpful for someone with a heart condition to join a walking group, but the doctor might not know what is available in the community.

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