



# GILL'S APPROACH

## Meet Gill

I'm Gill Dennes, a Practice Nurse in Oakley, West Fife. My job focuses on helping people to manage their long term conditions. I specialise in asthma, COPD and diabetes. I've been working as a Practice Nurse for 22 years. I also work as Clinical Lead for the Fife Respiratory Managed Clinical Network, and act as an education advisor for Practice Nurses in my Health Board.



**Self-management can't be 'imposed' as each person will already have their own ways of dealing with aspects of their health. The first rule is to listen and understand before working on shared goals. Then ensure that self-management strategies are based on this shared understanding and individualised.**

## What does self management mean for Gill?

It means supporting an individual to deal with some of the challenges of living their lives with one or more long term conditions. Support may come in a variety of forms, and can include using different services and support networks.

## How does self management fit into Gill's work?

A very large part of my work concerns facilitating self-management. Starting from initial diagnosis of a long term condition when we provide support and educate about the condition to enable a person to take control from the outset, through to regular reviews where we agree goals and signpost the person/family to appropriate services, and at times of acute progression or end of life/palliative needs. The Practice Nurse role is to help a person maintain optimal health within the wider primary care team and community. We work in a partnership and are accountable to individuals we support.

## How does self management help Gill and her colleagues?

When an individual accepts responsibility for his/her own health and feels supported to identify and work towards their own health goals, the outcome is generally more positive. Many people are at first surprised to be asked to share their experiences and think about their goals for health and wellbeing. This changes the dynamics of the patient-nurse relationship from being 'told what to do' to one of collaboration. This process generally makes people feel more valued as individuals. Health care professionals will support positive lifestyle changes, such as stopping smoking and increasing exercise or activity. It also means

**Increasing someone's confidence in their ability to change, together with knowledge, creates behaviour change.**

individuals can manage acute changes to their health quickly and appropriately. For example having a flare-up of their COPD and starting antibiotics and steroids promptly, without always having to consult with a doctor or nurse first.

### **How does self-management help the people you support?**

People live with their long term condition(s) on a daily basis. Learning to cope with the physical and emotional aspects of this, to deal with different situations, to access appropriate support and optimise their health and all key outcomes of successful self-management.

**“People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they themselves discovered, than by those which have come into the minds of others.”**  
*Pascal (17th Century mathematician and philosopher)*

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