

Collaborative Mental Health Care, Older Persons and Sleep Disturbance

Wayne's story

Wayne is a 67 year old man, who has been married to Beverley for over 30 years. About five years ago he was forced to retire from his job as a security guard at a large public hospital's Emergency Department. Though not well off by any standards, they are financially comfortable and have enjoyed a fulfilling life with an emphasis on their close knit family.

Both have attended the same GP clinic for years – Bev for chronic back pain and Wayne for hypertension. Bev is worried about Wayne. In recent weeks he's not quite been himself, culminating in a recent trip to the local shops when he came back empty handed, distressed and exhausted, having forgotten what he wanted to buy. For Beverley this was "*...the straw that broke the camel's back...we need to get you back to your old self...*" At Beverley's urging, Wayne has agreed to see you, their GP.

Bev comes with Wayne into the appointment to see you.

You know Wayne as a gentle and somewhat reticent, slightly overweight man who loved his long-standing shift work job. You have always found it curious how such a gentle fellow could function in such a confronting job and reflect that he hasn't quite been the same since he was 'forced' to retire when the hospital underwent a major restructure, following the appointment of a new managing director.

Bev starts the discussion by saying she's worried about Wayne and thinks he might be depressed. She recounts the recent shopping incident and generally observes that he spends all day drinking tea and watching Foxtel and seems to have lost interest in the things they used to enjoy, like socialising with friends and family, and tending to the garden.

Bev's back pain limits her physical capacity and Wayne's former job's flexible working hours meant he would often help her with the household chores and maintenance. Bev reflects on the irony "*..... now he has more time but is less available to me....*". She appears both worried and frustrated.

Wayne agrees that he doesn't do as much around the place, but asserts "*.....I'm not depressed, just tired. You know Bev, I don't have the energy to get through the day 'cos I'm awake half the night*".

Bev chuckles, saying he must sleep at least some of the night because his snoring is keeping HER awake. Upon questioning Wayne explains that apart from the usual "*life stuff*", nothing in particular is bothering him but he just wakes up a couple of times each night "*....needing to pee. And once I'm awake I find it hard to get back to sleep. I toss and turn for what seems like hours and if I do manage to get back to sleep, I still don't feel rested when I get up in the morning.*" Wayne says he really doesn't want to waste your time. "*....You tell her Doc, with old age, you don't get better, you just get worse..... there's nothing anyone can do hey? It's nature.*"