

FRANKIE: (Voiceover) I never thought it would be so difficult ... it seems like they have saved all the most difficult clients to give me for the end of my placement. This next case should be OK though. I've done the training on working with an interpreter and the lecturer said I did really well in the roleplay. I just need to remember to set the ground rule: "Everything that everyone says in the room will be translated" and then nothing can go wrong.

Repeating again and again under his breath until he goes into the building.

"Everything that everyone says in the room will be translated".

Consultation Room 1 and ZOOM screen with Mrs Abdalla and Fayek on two computers in their home, Frankie on another computer in the consultation room and Saif on another computer elsewhere.

FRANKIE: Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today Mrs Abdallah. As you know, I usually meet with your son, Fayek, on his own. I just want to say one thing before we start. Everything everybody says in the room will be interpreted so we can all understand. Is that OK?

Saif translates

FAYEK: What's he here for? (Indicating the interpreter). I always interpret for my mother. Can't you hear how I can speak English? I can explain everything to her.

FRANKIE: Saif, can you interpret that please? (FAYEK rolls his eyes/groans)

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Let me introduce everyone first. I am FRANKIE, Fayek's therapist, and this is SAIF, the interpreter.

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Thank you for offering to help, Fayek, but I am afraid I am not allowed to use family members as interpreters.

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Saif is an excellent interpreter. Is that OK with you Mrs Abdallah?

Mrs ABDALLAH: Yes.

FAYEK: What about what I want?

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Sorry Fayek. I can see this is not what you would prefer but can we try it out and see how it goes?

Saif translates

FAYEK: Do I have a choice?

FRANKIE: Mrs Abdallah, as you know Fayek has been getting into trouble at school.

Saif translates

FAYEK: You see what I mean? How would you like it if another person got to hear all your business?

Saif translates

FRANKIE: (to Mrs Abdallah) I am afraid that Fayek has been quite disruptive in class recently and the standard of his work has started to go down.

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Has anything happened recently that you think might have affected Fayek?

Saif translates

FAYEK: Nothing's happened. What are you trying to say?

FRANKIE: Mrs Abdallah, what about you? Have you noticed anything? Anything that may have made Fayek a bit anxious or sad or worried?

Saif translates

Mrs ABDALLAH: No.

FRANKIE: (to Mrs Abdallah) Has he said anything to you that has made you concerned?

FAYEK: She said no!

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Mrs Abdallah? Please anything that could help Fayek?

Saif translates

Mrs ABDALLAH: (hesitantly) Fayek's brother. We just heard. He has been arrested back home and we don't know what for.

Saif translates

FAYEK: This is a rubbish interpreter. He doesn't understand our language and he isn't translating properly.

Saif translates

FRANKIE: Saif has worked with us before. I think he is very good and we have never had any complaints.

Saif translates

FAYEK: Well maybe it is only stupid people who come to see you. If they don't speak English how will they be able to tell good from bad? And how will you?

SAIF: Excuse me, Frankie do you want me to translate?

FRANKIE: (Ignores him and answers Fayek) I am confident that he is a perfectly competent interpreter.

FAYEK : How do you know? I'm telling you. Are you saying you don't believe me ...?

FRANKIE: Look, I think we need to take a break. Why don't we all get a breath of fresh air – let's say 10 minutes?

Mrs Abdallah and Fayek's camera are turned off. Only Frankie and Saif's cameras are left on.

FRANKIE: I am really sorry Saif. I wasn't expecting that. I was so pleased with myself when I remembered to say that everything everybody says in the room will be translated.

SAIF: Yeah. That bit was great. You'd be surprised how many therapists forget to say that and it is the most important ground rule in the room. But I guess that when there is a family member in the room who has always interpreted for everyone in the past there is likely to be some resistance. I think Fayek and his family are scared.

FRANKIE: I know, and I should have picked up on that earlier. But I was so concerned to get the "working with an interpreter" bit right that I forgot that I still have to listen and try to understand what is going on. Even if I can't understand the words people are saying, I can still try and listen to what they aren't saying. I went kind of passive - like I forgot to be a therapist. My empathy just took a break.