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MY VOLUNTEER STORY

My name is Tracy Opoku Afriyie. I am a law student at the University of Northampton, and I work as a health and social care worker in a hospital.

As a career, I realized the impact of COVID-19 on people as I am a frontline worker. It was an anxious experience and seeing how it affected my society, I decided then to be a telephone befriender so I can talk to people who are either lonely or in isolation because of the virus. Before I made my first call to my current befriender, I was a bit panic-stricken. I had butterflies in my tummy as I did not know exactly how to approach 'my soon to be friend.'

She teaches me recipes and tells me about her experiences over the years. I enjoy my befriender's company and I believe she does as well. Before I started, I told my manager I could only dedicate an hour per week, but I found myself calling my befriender 2 hours a week if not more and even on my breaks when I went to work.

DON'T HESITATE

Sometimes my befriender likes to keep the conversation going but a technique I adopted was telling her where I was and how much time I was going to spend with her on that day. So, a few minutes to my stipulated time, I simply remind her, and we simply give concluding remarks. I love my befriender so much and whenever I am less busy, I call her. So, for all of you thinking of being a befriender, don't hesitate, it's a pleasant experience and my anxiety at the beginning was just a waste of time.

VERY FUNNY

I was assigned my first friend in June 2020. I called her a couple of times on a Monday and Tuesday, but she was unable to pick up. On Wednesday, she finally picked up. I asked her about her wellbeing, and she did the same. I realized my befriender was so friendly, interesting and very funny.