



DuPage
County
Illinois

Communicating with Someone Who Has a Psychiatric Illness

PROCEED TO INTERACT AS YOU:

- 1 BE CALM GIVE FIRM CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS;
- 2 ASSESS THE SITUATION for safety;
- 3 MAINTAIN ADEQUATE SPACE between you and the person;
- 4 RESPOND TO APPARENT FEELINGS;
- 5 RESPOND TO DELUSIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS by talking about the person's feelings rather than what he is saying;
- 6 BE HELPFUL, ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTIVE.

AVOID:

- 1 REINFORCING behavior related to the person's illness;
- 2 STARING at the person, this may be interpreted as a threat;
- 3 CONFUSING the person;
- 4 GIVING MULTIPLE CHOICES, this increases confusion;
- 5 WHISPERING, YELLING, RIDICULING, DECEIVING OR TOUCHING, this may cause more fear and lead to violence;

Someone with a psychiatric illness might...

have trouble with reality.	→	Be simple, truthful
be fearful.	→	Stay calm
be insecure.	→	Be accepting
have trouble concentrating.	→	Be brief, repeat
be over stimulated.	→	Limit input
easily become agitated.	→	Recognize agitation
have poor judgement.	→	Not expect rational discussion
be preoccupied.	→	Get attention first
be withdrawn.	→	Initiate relevant conversation
have changing emotions.	→	Disregard
have changing plans.	→	Keep to one plan
have little empathy for you.	→	Recognize as a symptom
believe delusions.	→	Ignore, don't argue
have low self-esteem and motivation.	→	Stay positive

So you need to...

www.namidupage.org

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