

DEVELOP SENSITIVITY, UNDERSTANDING, AND BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

Symptoms vary from person to person. Understand the illness brings limitations. Behavior issues make us forget mental illness is a medical issue.

- Speak kindly, calmly, quietly, slowly
- Maintain a reasonable safe distance
- Get beyond strong language directed at you
- Respond to rage with quiet assurance
- Be patient and willing to repeat yourself
- Use short, clear, direct sentences
- Be simple and concrete with one direction at a time
- Be pleasant, positive, respectful, and firm.
- Make no sudden moves
- Do not challenge delusions but do not agree with them
- You cannot "shoot down" a person with mania or argue with a schizophrenic delusion. These behaviors are caused by the illness and you cannot fix them or talk them out of their false beliefs. It compares to asking someone under a strong influence of alcohol to make sense when they speak
- Listen carefully and don't interrupt
- May have to disregard or ignore statements instead of arguing

Many persons with mental illness are in jail for illness-related behaviors. Jails are not equipped to give mental health treatment. If the law enforcement officer is called, request one that has crisis intervention training and is on the CIT or Crisis Intervention Team. The goal of the program is to help persons with mental disorders access medical treatments rather than placing them in the criminal justice system

- Introduce yourself and use their name while speaking to them
- Ask what the problem is.
- Listen carefully for their definition of the problem and the feelings they are expressing
- Ask for clarification and further questions if necessary
- Re-state their concerns showing that you are listening and understand. You may not agree but you are acknowledging the reality of his/her experience.
- Reflect feelings in an attempt to comfort and help them recognize their feelings
- Ask: How can I help you? If possible, suggest options and give information. Say "I am here to help".
- You may need to say "calm down" or "remain calm so I can help you"
- Praise any positive statements or behaviors and be encouraging
- Attempt to stay calm and focused and attempt to resolve difficulty without confrontation.
- Uncover motive for strong emotions and behavior. You may be able to use the motive to influence behavior or agree on a action