

Communicating with Someone Who Has a Psychiatric Illness



- PROCEED TO INTERACT AS YOU:**
- BE CALM and GIVE FIRM, CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS;
 - ASSESS THE SITUATION for safety;
 - MAINTAIN ADEQUATE SPACE between you and the person;
 - RESPOND TO APPARENT FEELINGS;
 - RESPOND TO DELUSIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS by talking about the person's feeling rather than what he is saying;
 - BE HELPFUL, ENCOURAGING and SUPPORTIVE.
- AVOID:**
- REINFORCING behavior related to the person's illness;
 - STARING at the person, this may be interpreted as a threat;
 - CONFUSING the person;
 - GIVING MULTIPLE CHOICES, this increases confusion;
 - WHISPERING, YELLING, RIDICULING, DECEIVING or TOUCHING, this may cause more fear and lead to violence.

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|--|----------------------------------|
| Someone with a psychiatric illness might... | So you need to... |
| 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 judgment | → 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| Be withdrawn | → Initiate relevant conversation |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 |



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Cut on dotted line then fold in half to form a two-sided card.