

**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:**

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.

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- Be withdrawn → Initiate relevant conversation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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