

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, RIDICUING, 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| Be withdrawn | Initiate relevant conversation |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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 217-522-1403 * 800-346-4572 * namiil@sbcglobal.net * http://il.nami.org

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