

WINTER SHELTER VOLUNTEER TRAINING
JACKSON COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH
October 20, 2016

Question: What to do/not to do when someone is agitated?

DO: Give the individual more personal space, take a step back, open your hands, bend your knees, stand at an angle. If possible, move away from others.

DO: Identify yourself, your role, and ask if they can tell you what the problem is.

DO: Reflect back what you heard the problem is, and also what you observe emotionally “okay, what I think you’re saying as that you got up to use the bathroom and when you came back Mr. X was in your space, and you don’t feel comfortable with that plus you’re a little mad, and you want your space back. Did I get that right? “

DO: Validate “that would pretty much make anyone mad” or “I can see how you’d feel like that” or “Oh shoot, that’s a hassle” or “Yeah, that would make anyone upset...I see your point” , or “Aw, that really upset you” etc. Hint: validating the emotion will help a person feel heard and empathized with.

DO: Collaborate to see if there is a way to solve the problem realistically, given the confines of the situation. “would it be helpful if I went over and talked with Mr. X with you, to see if we can come up with someone that works for everyone?” or “I want to help, let’s see if we can come up with an idea of how to solve this problem.”

DO: Use clear and simple language. Upset people have less problem solving abilities and less comprehension. Use repetition. Use matching language and pace, while making an effort to slow it down.

DO: Set limits with “I statements” by saying “I need to move on now,” or “I need you to hear me saying that I’m going to do my best to help you, but I need you to lower your voice,” or “I can’t promise you’ll get that exact space back, but I will help you get to a space where you feel you can rest,” or “If you leave, I need you to understand that you can’t come back past 11pm” etc.

DO: Recognize if you yourself are becoming fearful and/or emotionally activated, use calming and grounding techniques to maintain a calm demeanor- 90% of emotional information is communicated nonverbally. (Take a deep breath and exhale fully, open your palms and face them outward, even say “Oh wow, I’m noticing that this seems to be getting my pulse up a little but, let me take a breath or two while we try to think about a next step”)

DON’T: Say “calm down”, assign blame, argue, or take sides.

DON’T: Take it personally...remember the idea of “shoulder-to-shoulder” problem solving.

DON’T: Escalate. Take a step back, open your hands, bend your knees, stand at an angle.

This information can be found in much greater detail at the link provided:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3298202/>

Question: How to interact with someone who is very withdrawn or talking out loud to themselves, hearing voices, etc.?

Remember: Stress makes everything worse, and impairs function- people who are anxious will be more anxious, people who get withdrawn will be more withdrawn, people who hear voices will likely hear more voices, and people who are paranoid will be more paranoid.

If someone is hearing voices to the degree that they are attending to internal stimuli, remember that the incidence of violence within the population of people with schizophrenia is no greater than the incidence of violence within the population of people without schizophrenia. Hearing voices is not a precursor to violent behavior.

- A person who is hearing voices cannot just stop, but they can be helped to remember what has helped them feel safer in the past. You can use the de-escalation techniques and also ask “what has helped the voices go down a bit in the past?” or “What has helped to get you feeling safer in the past?”
- A person who is withdrawn or isolative is likely doing what he or she needs to in order to feel safe. You can offer that you notice he/she might be feeling withdrawn, and ask if there is anything that he/she can think of that would help.
- A person who is exhibiting paranoia will not be open to having that belief reasoned with or challenged. That will lead to escalation. If a person is exhibiting general paranoia such as “the government is out to get me” they might have ideas of what they need to feel safe, and you can ask them “Is there anything you can think of that would help you to feel safer in this moment?” A person who is exhibiting specific paranoia is in a more acute state: “the illuminati have been terrorizing me and I know you’re/he’s/she’s in on it” is a more challenging person to work with.
 - 1) Don’t challenge/ calmly clarify and assess for risk “You have a belief that I am trying to terrorize you? Do you feel like you need to fight back? Do you have a weapon?”
 - 2) “Can you be safe here, right now?” Always remember: Safety First
 - 3) Set limits: “That threatening talk makes people feel unsafe. People need to feel safe here. I need you to stop”

Question: When to call for help from JCMH or law enforcement?

If a person is physically becoming out of control, i.e.: not controlling body, becoming aggressive, hitting, running away, they are in a more escalated state of agitation and may be a risk to you, others or themselves.

Call JCMH 24 hour crisis line at 541-774-8201/ 24 hours a day/7days a week. After-hours, medical messenger answers all the calls and then relays them to the appropriate on-call crisis worker. A crisis worker who is physically located in the building, or working somewhere in the field, will then call you right back, and help to triage the situation. Depending on the situation, they may speak to the agitated person, make recommendations to you of what might work, or suggest that law enforcement be called. You calling the police will be more efficient, but JCMH crisis worker can assist, depending on the situation.

Crisis De-Escalation Techniques

1. Speak softer, more slowly and make eye contact if appropriate
2. Use positive body language. Try and relax. Take deep breaths. Have the client take breaths. Do not cross arms or legs. Sit or stand so you are both at eye level
3. Ask for a break if necessary and give the other permission to exit or walk away. Know where your exits are and leave the person in crisis an exit
4. Meet the client where they are at...and acknowledge their situation
5. Take time to think about the problem and clarify the problem:
What is the real issue?
What do I want to accomplish?
Who is responsible for what?
What, specifically, do I want to change?
6. Use I statements. "I can see you are angry"
7. Repeat messages and clarify often "I think I heard you say... but it sounds like you want".. "Tell me more.."
8. Remember to continue to breath
9. Words that may de-escalate a conflict are: maybe, what if, I feel, it seems like, I think, sometimes, perhaps, I wonder
10. Affirm and acknowledge the position and needs of others. "I can appreciate your situation..", "It sounds hard for you too...", "Thank you for your patience..."
11. Ask open ended questions that do not require yes or no answers..."What are your thoughts about this.."
12. Take another deep breath and wrap up