

RESPONDING HELPFULLY TO DELUSIONS / HALLUCINATIONS

People often wonder how best to respond if a family member wishes to talk about symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions.

It may not be helpful to try to disprove strange beliefs or directly question the reality of symptoms. This often just leads to arguments.

It may be more helpful to try to empathize with the feelings that go along with the symptoms and not comment on their reality. This also helps to keep communication going with your relative.

If your relative insists on an opinion, then it is best to give a truthful one. It may be helpful to express regret at having to differ.

DETECT EVENING COURSE

We have tried here to give a very brief account of some aspects of psychotic illness.

All these topics are covered in much more detail in the evening course which we hope you will attend.

Research in Dublin has shown that when families attend the course, their affected relative is far less likely to relapse.

We suggest that you discuss the content of this leaflet with other family members and make a list of questions arising to bring to the evening sessions.

CONTENTS OF THE COURSE

Session 1 What is Psychosis?

Session 2 Biological Aspects and Medication

Session 3 Social and Psychological Aspects

Session 4 The Experience of Psychosis and Recovery

Session 5 The Family – Difficulties and Opportunities

Session 6 Legal Aspects and Planning Ahead



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Look forward to seeing you.



THE FAMILY AND PSYCHOSIS

Information Leaflet and Course Overview



www.detect.ie

THE FAMILY AND PSYCHOSIS

When someone suffers from a psychotic illness it is good to be aware that **this is not the fault of the family or the person themselves.**

A person cannot make hallucinations or delusions go away simply by an effort of will. However with appropriate treatments, most people can and do recover from psychosis.

Family support is crucial to recovery and the more families know about psychotic illness the better they are able to help.

When someone is developing a psychotic illness it may be very difficult to detect in the early stages, even for health professionals.

A person's experience of psychotic illness and recovery is very individual to that person.

PROBLEMS THAT OCCUR WITH A PSYCHOTIC ILLNESS

Any one of us, if we have a psychotic illness, can experience the following problems.

- Very little energy or motivation – not to be confused with laziness.
- Difficulties with concentration that also affect memory
- Disturbances in our sleep patterns.
- Problems with emotions. Sometimes reactions don't seem to fit the situation. Sometimes emotions appear absent and can make someone seem indifferent to others.
- An inability to see that we are ill is common and can be very frustrating for friends and family in their efforts to help.

DIAGNOSING PSYCHOTIC ILLNESS

A health professional assessing somebody for a psychotic illness will take into account their symptoms and also their recent life history, including work, education and social relationships. Sometimes it may take time to arrive at a definite diagnosis.

MEDICATION

Medications are used to treat the symptoms of psychosis. Stopping medication too soon or without consulting the doctor is often the cause of a relapse.

Medications include antipsychotics, mood stabilizers and anti depressants.

People vary in how they react to medications so it may take a while before the right one for that person is found. Further information on medication can be found at www.rethink.org

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACHES

Medications can bring about a situation where other interventions, essential to full recovery, can be started.

These may include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, family interventions and occupational therapy which are vital for both early recovery and helping people to stay well. However, as with a new job or course, fear often accompanies starting these interventions. Families can play a big part in addressing these fears by providing reassurance and pointing out the potential benefits.

DEALING WITH LACK OF INSIGHT

People can have very little insight into their psychiatric condition and may not believe they have a psychotic illness.

Trying to convince someone that they have an illness can be very frustrating for relatives and often just results in an argument.

It is often more helpful to talk with people about aspects of the situation they themselves see as problematic and try to agree on how the treatment they have been offered may help with these while avoiding an argument about psychiatric illness.

