

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION?

Did you know?



According to the University of Texas Harris County Psychiatric Center, “People with mental illnesses may display one or more of the following behaviors:

- Talk of suicide or threats to others
- Prolonged feelings of intense tension or anxiety
- Sudden changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- Atypical thoughts and speech
- Sudden changes in mood and behavior
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Physical symptoms, including pains of various sorts”

(Source: The University of Texas: Harris County Psychiatric Center http://hcpc.uth.tmc.edu/mental_illnesses.htm)

Your goal as a counselor is to provide as much help as possible, regardless of the behaviors displayed. If a conversation becomes difficult, these tips can help guide your response.

If someone is:	You need to:
Having trouble with reality	Be simple, truthful, not sarcastic
Fearful	Stay calm, use a reassuring tone
Insecure	Be accepting
Having trouble concentrating	Be brief, repeat your point
Over-stimulated	Limit input
Easily agitated	Recognize agitation, allow retreat
Exhibiting poor judgment	Don't always expect rational discussion
Withdrawn	Initiate conversation
Experiencing changing emotions	Have patience
Making confused plans	Stick to one plan
Talking about delusions	Ignore or change the subject, don't argue

Source: NAMI of DuPage County, Illinois, http://www.namidupage.org/support/crisis_tips.html. Tips from a talk by Dr. Christopher Amenson, Ph.D. at NAMI California.