

Module 4: Managing Negative Symptoms

REACT online Toolkit info sheet

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Information Zone

The term 'negative symptoms' refers to loss of normal behaviours. The most common include loss of emotional expression, loss of motivation, loss of pleasure in experiences or other people, and reduced levels of speech. Negative symptoms are common.

- No-one really knows what causes negative symptoms. One theory is that they emerge as a result of repeated experiences of failure and threat that result in the person losing motivation to explore their environment or seek support from others.
- Currently available treatments (medication and psychological therapies) are generally less effective in treating negative symptoms compared to positive symptoms.
- Negative symptoms of illness often cause the most stress and worry for other family members. They can carry on even after other positive symptoms have gone.
- People with negative symptoms may need extra practical help with looking after themselves. They need other people to understand that their negative symptoms are not due to laziness. Negative symptoms can also be difficult to distinguish from the effects of medication (because it makes people feel sleepy) and depression.
- Negative symptoms can make people more likely to try risky or illegal activities such as drug taking. They can't enjoy the things they used to, so they try and find something else to take the place of these.

Visit the REACT NHS website, (www.reactnhs.uk), to find out more about different types of negative symptoms and how others have learned to manage them.



Your Early Intervention team can make sure you
get access to the REACT online toolkit



www.reactnhs.uk

Department of Health Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HTA, NIHR, NHS or the Department of Health.

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Top Tips for managing negative symptoms

These are tips that other relatives have found helpful. Feel free to use the ones you like and ignore the ones you don't.

Tip 1 – Take Care of Yourself

This problem may last some time. To last the distance you need to pace yourself. Keep doing the things that keep you healthy, happy and out of debt. Keep your own life on track. Keep up with friends, work and family.

Tip 2 – Try Not to Show Your Frustration and Anger

This will only increase tension and makes everyone more jumpy. It may get things done today but makes it harder next time.

Tip 3 – Think About the Bigger Picture

For most people, recovery involves finding ways to get enjoyment and fulfilment out of life. The satisfaction of getting day-to-day jobs done isn't enough to motivate many people. But they might very well be able to find 'passions' to enjoy and get a sense of satisfaction from these.

Tip 4 – Try Not to Nag

Criticism, nagging or complaining about someone's behaviour can get them to behave better, but only in the short term. Psychosis can make people super-sensitive to criticism, too much of which could make symptoms worse in some circumstances. It won't make you feel any better either.

Tip 5 – Reward Every Effort by Making a 'Song and Dance' About it

Negative symptoms and thinking problems make it harder to do things without prompts. It's also harder to remember about things you've done well in the past.

Give clear and enthusiastic feedback for all successes and attempts. Make sure the person is surrounded by things which will remind them of the good things they have done.

Noticing and praising small steps towards recovery can really help.

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