

Module 6: Dealing with Difficult Situations

REACT online Toolkit info sheet

1 2 3 4 5 **6** Dealing with Difficult Situations 7 8 9 10 11 12

We asked relatives and family what advice they would give for dealing with difficult and upsetting situations.

There are no 'dos' and 'don'ts' as every situation is different. However these are a 'try to' and 'try not to' list based on what other relatives and friends have found worked for them.

Try to	Try not to
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give sympathy and support.• Make sure that the person feels that you understand and love them and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrap them in cotton wool or try to protect them from everything.• Take on their problems.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help with practical issues such as getting medication, getting to appointments, sorting out housing and bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect them from having to learn to do these things themselves. Make sure that the mental health services take a fair share of responsibility.• Give cash to people who run out of money repeatedly or spend it on drugs, alcohol or
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell people how their behaviour affects you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deal with a problem when you are stressed. This risks you getting angry and making the
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help with the treatment that the person receives. Take part in groups or other meetings, such as care plan reviews when you are invited. If possible, insist you have a copy of the care plan if you do not already have one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insist or force the person to take medication or attend their appointments. This might only make relationships worse in the long run.



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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Information Zone

Up to 30% of people with mental health problems also have problems with drugs or alcohol

Generally speaking, taking street drugs or binge-drinking is associated with a greater risk of a person becoming involved in crime or violence

Having a psychotic illness makes a person slightly more likely to commit a crime or violent act. However, it makes it much more likely for the person to become a victim of crime or violence

Most families caring for someone with mental health problems face having to cope with some difficult behaviour. Here are some common ones relatives told us about:

Are any of these a problem for you? Are there any difficult behaviours you would add to this list?

Recommended Resources

Takes drugs

Is irritable

Makes a mess

Is 'clingy' or needs a lot of reassurance

Can't handle money

Is embarrassing or draws attention to

Drinks to excess

Threatens or is violent

Has bad habits

Hangs about with a bad crowd

Gets into trouble

Talks about death or suicide

The **Resource Directory** lists these resources and more but some websites which you may find useful include:

Oxleas NHS Trust have a factsheet for families about dealing with difficult behaviour.

This Scottish government website has a page where you can work through steps to manage stress:

<http://www.stepsforstress.org/recognising-stress.html>

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Try to

Try not to

Say

“It really upset me when you swore at me”
or “We cannot tolerate you threatening your sister like that”

Get advice from experts or other families.

If you feel stressed or overwhelmed by a behaviour, walk away or take a break.

Arrange a family meeting to discuss it when everyone is feeling calmer.

Ask the person to make changes that might improve their behaviour.

Suggest that the positive change in their behaviour could be linked to something that they would like, such as a shopping trip or a hairdo.

Make sure that they don't get the reward or trip unless they at least make a genuine effort.

Help with the treatment that the person receives. Take part in groups or other meetings such as care plan reviews when you are invited and, if possible, insist that you have a copy of the care plan if you do not already have one.

Say

“You don't respect anyone anymore”,
“That's a nasty thing to say to your sister”

Expect the problem to go away on its own or hide it from others.

Deal with a problem when you are stressed. This risks you getting angry and making the situation worse.

Beg, force, blackmail or cajole.

Aim for things that haven't much got much chance of actually happening.

Make promises you can't keep.

Expect rapid change overnight.

Insist or force the person to take medication or attend their appointments. This might only make relationships worse in the long run.

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