



EARLY DETECTION & TREATMENT OF PSYCHOSIS EDUCATION SERIES

How to Help Someone with Psychosis

When someone you know and care about develops psychosis it's hard to know how to help them. It may be difficult to communicate with the person. They may behave very differently than they usually would.

It is often hard to tell whether something is really going wrong with the person. It may seem to be part of the normal ups and downs of life.

If you know the person well, the change in behaviour can get to the point that you realize something serious is happening and help is needed.

Getting the Person to Care

Helping the person who is experiencing psychosis to get the help they need can be challenging.

A person who is, or may be, experiencing psychosis, needs to see a doctor for a complete assessment. There are many causes of psychosis. The doctor will try to determine what is causing the psychosis in this particular person and determine what the best treatment might be.

Unfortunately, people who are psychotic sometimes do not realize they are ill. The person may be reluctant to go see a doctor even when encouraged by family and friends.

Sometimes people are reluctant to see a doctor, especially a psychiatrist, because of the perceived stigma of having a "mental health problem".

It may be helpful to remind the person that psychosis is a medical condition. Like any serious illness, it requires medical attention and can be treated.

Helping During Treatment

Even after a person sees a doctor and is told they are experiencing psychosis, they may be hesitant to begin treatment including taking medication.

Most people would rather not take medications. They may think that medications are a crutch and want to deal with their situation in other ways. Some people worry that the medication will make it hard for them to think, or have other side effects. Others are concerned that it may be addictive. Educating yourself about these concerns can help dispel some myths and prepare you when supporting your family member or friend.

The word psychosis sometimes can be frightening and lead people to think of the old mental hospitals. These days, treatment for psychosis is usually carried out in the community. Sometimes a short hospitalization period is needed.

Once treatment is started, family and friends can help the person become aware of changes in their thinking or behaviour. These changes need to be communicated to the doctor so that treatment can be properly adjusted.

Family and friends can also help the person by developing good communication with the doctor and other mental health professionals.

Together, the person, family, friends and the professionals can form a team to provide the person with the best possible care.

Creating a Stable, Respectful Environment

Research has shown that a person receiving treatment for psychosis will recover more quickly and completely if they have a stable and respectful environment in which to live. In such an environment the person feels they are safe and they can relax.

Family and friends often wonder whether they should push the person to do more, or let them go at their own pace. Finding a balance can be difficult. Everyone needs encouragement to resume activities as they recover. They also need rest.

There is a place for reasonable, clear rules in a stable living situation.

Research indicates that it is most helpful for family and friends to adopt an attitude of "distant caring". That is, to care about the person but not to be too involved in the minute to minute decisions about everyday life.

Nobody is to Blame

Sometimes people with psychosis feel that they brought on the illness and that they are to blame. Family and friends may also think that if only the person would 'get hold of themselves' the problems would be solved.

Research clearly shows that psychotic illness does not result from poor parenting or laziness.

People experiencing psychosis are not to blame for their illness. Their families are not to blame.

Taking Care of Yourself

Being a family member or friend of a person with psychosis can be stressful. It is important to take care of yourself so you have the mental and physical energy to be supportive of the person with the illness as they enter treatment and begin to recover.

Getting away from the situation sometimes and doing things you enjoy may seem selfish at times, but in the long run it is better for everyone if you keep up your own health.

Getting More Information

There is power in knowledge. Learning more about psychosis, its causes and treatment, helps family members and friends feel they have a better understanding of what is happening now and what to expect in the future.

Ask the doctor and other health care professionals working with your family member or friend for fact sheets, brochures, books or videos about psychosis. In many areas there are community organizations that provide information. These organizations may also sponsor meetings and workshops where you can learn more. Meeting other people dealing with a similar situation can be particularly beneficial.

Key Points

- Create a stable, respectful environment.
- Nobody is to blame for psychosis.
- Take care of yourself so you can continue to provide support.

For More Information Contact:

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