

Mental Health Awareness

Schizophrenia



Schizophrenia is a complex mental health condition that requires understanding and support. As a caregiver or support worker, it's essential to recognize the symptoms and know how to provide effective assistance.

What is Schizophrenia:

Schizophrenia presents with a variety of symptoms, including hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, and negative symptoms like social withdrawal and lack of motivation. Observing changes in behavior, difficulty concentrating, and unusual beliefs or behaviors can help identify the condition.

Schizophrenia and Violence:

Schizophrenia increases the risk of violence compared to the general population. This risk is further heightened by factors including substance abuse, history of violence, medication non-adherence, and limited access to comprehensive treatment.

Studies highlight the significant impact of substance abuse on violent behavior among individuals with schizophrenia, mirroring trends seen in the wider community. Medication non-adherence exacerbates symptoms, potentially escalating aggression during uncontrolled psychotic episodes. Despite these risks, it's crucial to note that most individuals with schizophrenia are not violent. Understanding and addressing contributing factors such as substance abuse and ensuring consistent treatment can mitigate the risk of violent behavior in this population.

By addressing these factors and providing comprehensive care, the likelihood of violent incidents among individuals with schizophrenia can be reduced, promoting their well-being and integration within the community.



1 in 300 people have schizophrenia, Onset age is between 16 and 30



Treatment Options:

Treatment for schizophrenia often involves a combination of medication and therapy. Antipsychotic drugs, mood stabilizers, and antidepressants may be prescribed to manage symptoms. Therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), family therapy, and support groups and services can also be beneficial in promoting recovery.

Remember

- Each individual's experience with schizophrenia is unique, requiring personalized support.
- Your empathy, patience, and support play a significant role in their recovery journey.

In the instance that you feel unsafe, or your participant is in danger of hurting themselves or others; or it is an emergency situation, call 000.

You can also call the Mental Health Line 1800 011 511, and ensure you call the Office 02 8502 8400, report the incident to our Office staff and counselling support or a debrief meeting will be arranged for you.

@kairoscare



Supporting Individuals

Encouraging treatment adherence is essential. Reminding individuals to take medication, attending therapy sessions together, and monitoring for any side effects can support their treatment journey.

Recognizing warning signs of a crisis, such as agitation, suicidal thoughts, or severe hallucinations, is vital. In such situations, remaining calm and taking appropriate action is key, if an event turns to danger to either your client or yourself the following actions are to be taken asap.

Contact emergency services by calling 000, ensuring your safety is acquired first, then your clients and providing reassurance and support can help navigate through crises safely. Once an event may have occurred, please ensure you call the office to report the incident and ensure we can support you with debrief counselling.

In an event of escalated behaviour:

If you encounter someone who is angry or upset the following verbal de-escalation techniques may help you to calm them down.

There are three important concepts to keep in mind:

- Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible. Your only objective should be to reduce the level of arousal so that discussion becomes possible.
- We are all driven to fight, flight or freeze when scared. However, to calm down someone who is showing signs of aggressive behavior, angry or upset you must appear to be calm yourself, even if you aren't.
- Safety; firstly, are you in danger? secondly is your participant in danger or in danger of hurting someone else? Is this an event that emergency support is needed? Call 000, then call the office 02 8502 8400.

What can you do or avoid:

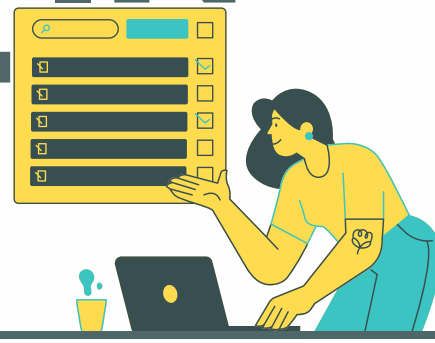
10 things you can do:

1. Appear calm, centred and self-assured, even though you might not feel that way!
2. Remember you are not trying to do anything except calm the person down.
3. Use a modulated, low and monotonous tone of voice.
4. Treat the person with dignity and respect. Ignore insults and don't be judgemental.
5. Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your usual distance.
6. Empathise with feelings but not with the behaviour (e.g. "I understand that you are upset, but it is not okay for you to get in the way.")
7. Ask questions like "Help me to understand what you are upset about..." rather than "how are you feeling?".
8. Suggest simple alternatives e.g. "Let's move over there where we can see better".
9. Give choices where possible in which both alternatives are positive and safe (e.g. "Would you like me to take you to a taxi so you can go to the hospital and be there with your friend, or would you prefer to go home first?").
10. Stay safe and know you have the choice to leave at any time.

10 things to avoid

1. Don't rush in. Take a few moments to assess the situation, look at the person's body language, listen to their tone of voice and make a plan (including how to get away if things get out of hand).
2. Don't get loud or try to yell over a screaming person.
3. Don't ask how a person is feeling or try to interpret their feelings.
4. Don't respond to abusive questions, just ignore them.
5. DO NOT SMILE. This could be misinterpreted as mockery.
6. Do not touch, even though touching may seem appropriate and usual in your peer group. Agitated people may misinterpret physical contact as hostile or threatening.
7. Do not argue or try to convince – give choices, not explanations.
8. Keep your hands out of your pockets, up and available to protect yourself.
9. Don't point or shake your finger.
10. Avoid constant eye contact – allow the person to break their gaze and look away.

TIPS FOR RESPONDING IN THE MOMENT



Action Plan

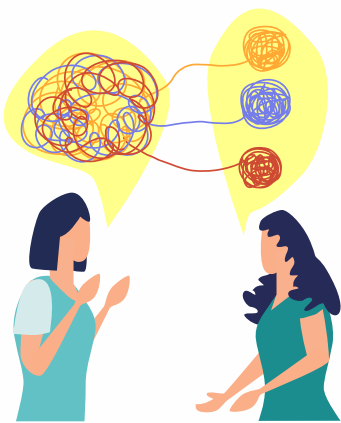
HOW TO REACT IS IMPORTANT

- Stay calm.
- Your participant is distressed, don't take anything they say personally.
- Speak and move in an unhurried way.
- Keep any questions you ask simple. Someone who is upset usually cannot understand or cope with complicated statements.



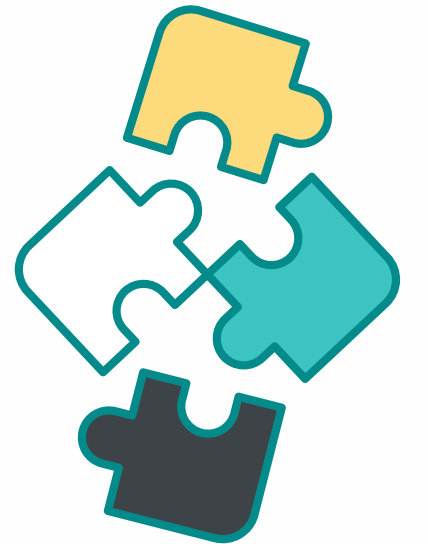
WHAT YOU COULD SAY:

- Acknowledge your participant's distress. For example, you could say, "I can see you're upset. Was it my knocking over the newspapers that has upset you?"
- Ask if there is anything that could be done to make things better. For example say, "Would you like to talk outside?"
- Let your participant know that they do not have to talk to you about why he is upset, but that you are concerned and would like to help.



WHAT APPROACH YOU COULD TAKE:

- If at any time you are uncomfortable or feel that your **safety** is at risk, **you are able to leave**, call emergency services if your participant is in showing signs of an episode and call the office as soon as available.
- **Listen**, don't interrupt or express judgement. Then reflect back what your participant has said, summarising in your words, to show you are listening and to check that you have understood.
- Let your participant know it is up to him if he still wants to go do his chosen activity.
- If your participant insists that they don't want to talk, or you are uncomfortable, let them know that you will leave now, but would be able to come back another time, if they wanted. Call the office as soon as you can to record the incident.



IN AN EVENT BEHAVIOR ESCALATES:



If you feel it is an emergency situation, if you feel unsafe or the participant is dangerous to themselves or others, call **000**.
You can call the Mental Health Line 1800 011 511.

Call the Office **02 8502 8400**, report the incident to our Office staff and counselling support and debrief will be arranged.

Tips to help prepare for next time:

- Contact your supervisor and provide the details of what occurred to obtain advice on future contact.
- Follow up with our staff, if relevant, before your next meeting with your participant to agree the best approach for your future involvement.
- At the next appointment discuss how your participant might let you know if anything you are doing is making him uncomfortable and the best way you can respond if it happens again.
- Speak with your supervisor and ask for help if the situation has left you with feelings of unease. Many organisations will have an Employee Assistance Program where you can talk to someone confidentially.