



# DEVELOPING OUR SKILLS OF COMMUNICATION

# USEFUL TIPS

Find out as much as you can about the mental illness and the treatments offered.

Plan in advance what to do if your relative's illness gets worse.

Set up an Advance Statement and Advance Decision with HPFT.

Trust your own judgement in dealings with professionals; if you feel there is a serious problem, persist in making your views known until you get a satisfactory response.

# DEVELOPING OUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Some carers describe their caring role as an 'emotional roller coaster' or as 'walking on eggshells'. The person you care for:

- May have mood changes that occur without warning.
- Is often not in control of strong feelings that suddenly become convictions.
- An ordinary conversation may turn into a series of accusations without apparent cause.

# USEFUL TIPS

- Relax and stay calm.
- Minimise distractions; ask if you can turn off the TV for example.
- Stick to present issues.
- Simplify. One topic at a time.
- Listen and make eye-contact (unless this is threatening).

# USEFUL TIPS

Remember the person you care for may not be aware of exactly how hurtful or upsetting their language and/or behaviour is. You could try to:

- Change the subject
- Distract the person
- Leave them alone for a while
- Arguing is not helpful
- Agree that the person believes what they are saying while making it clear that the experience is not real for you.

# USEFUL TIPS

- Don't start a conversation expecting a confrontation. Approaching a person with your defenses up will likely make the communication difficult.
- Don't take it personally; remember that your loved one's illness can affect their behavior and communication skills.
- Don't criticize, accuse or blame.
- Don't assume. Clarify by asking questions.
- Don't expect the other person to "just understand it" if you cannot explain it.

# USEFUL TIPS

- Don't raise your voice or attempt to intimidate or "discipline" the person.
- Don't use general and loaded words such as "always" or "never". Use specific words instead.
- Don't use sarcasm and avoid humor in difficult situations.
- Avoid sounding patronizing or condescending. If someone treated YOU like a child, would you take them seriously?

# USEFUL TIPS

- Honestly sharing your own feelings can reduce defensiveness on both sides.
- Use “I-statements” not “you-statements”.
- Acknowledge what the other person says and how they feel, even if you don’t agree.
- Use humor in easy situations.



# USE CLEAR SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

I know you are upset – what can I do to help?

I know how upset you are – try to .....

I understand how you must be feeling.....

I can hear you are very angry

When you.....I feel

I would like.....

I know that.....

Would it help to.....?

I do not want .....

What about.....?

I realise that.....

How do you feel about.....?

I want.....

I feel that.....

I think.....

# USEFUL TIPS

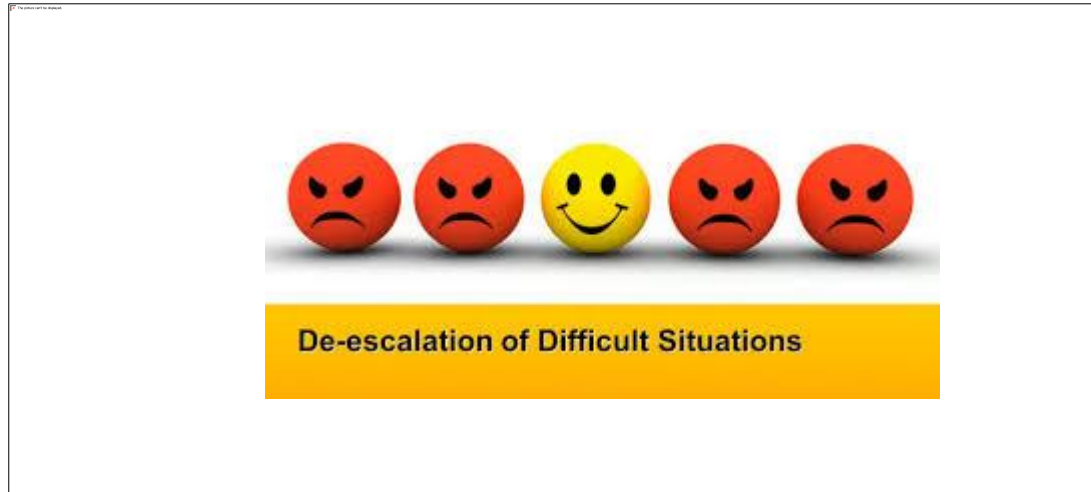
It maybe a good idea to leave the room.

Suggest the person you care for leaves the room

After an upsetting event for the whole family to talk about it and work out ways of avoiding or limiting similar situations in the future.

If all concerned could be calm, you can make it clear to each other what can be tolerated and what will not be, rather than leaving unsaid and letting irritation and upset build up.

# DE-ESCALATION TIPS



**SEE HANDOUT - CPI'S TOP 10 DE-ESCALATION TIPS  
(Resource from Crisis Prevention)**

**RE-ASSURANCE**

**ENABLER**

**SUPPORTIVE**

**PATIENT**

**ENCOURAGEMENT**

**CALM**

**TOLERANT**



# LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Mental illness can take its toll on carers as well as the person they care for. It is very important that as a first step carers look after themselves. It is easy to become so involved in trying to help the person you care for that you neglect our own health and wellbeing.



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# USEFUL CONTACTS

Carers in Hertfordshire

Caring & Coping / Learning & Development courses

New Leaf – Hertfordshire's Wellbeing College

Register as a carer with the GP

HPFT Wellbeing Team or Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) [www.hpft.nhs.uk](http://www.hpft.nhs.uk)

HertsHelp - 0300 123 4044 / [info@hertshelp.net](mailto:info@hertshelp.net)



# THANK YOU ANY QUESTIONS?



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