



Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care
a core program of PMHCC, Inc.

Empowerment through
education, **support** and advocacy

Tips for Supporting Individuals Experiencing **Psychosis**

- Don't challenge a person's hallucinations or delusions: It is real to them and they need your support to feel safe
- Don't engage in the hallucination or delusion: Example: if someone jumps on the couch screaming that the floor is on fire, don't jump on the couch and pretend the floor is on fire with them. Instead, acknowledge that they believe that the floor is on fire and try and bring the person back to reality. Point out that you are standing on the floor and you do not feel any fire.
- It's Not Personal: Try to not take any delusion or hostile statements personally – it's probably not about you.
- Dignity treatment-don't laugh or make a judgment about a person's hallucinations or delusions. Judging people or teasing them about their symptoms can only make the symptoms worse. Teasing, judging or joking with them about their symptoms can also make you a target of the hallucinations or delusions as well.
- Take the time to talk with them if they are psychotic. Make sure you have their attention before talking to them – use their name. If the person doesn't believe they are who they are, don't use that name; he thinks he is the Archangel Michael, don't start calling him Michael.
- Speak slow: Do not rush your speaking - the person may need extra time to process. Speaking slow is difficult because when you're in crisis mode everything is in overdrive.
- Taking meds? If they report to you that they are no longer taking their medication, or they don't want their medication, or the medication is poison - document and report immediately to their psychiatrist or prescribing physician.
- Get immediate assistance if the person becomes a danger to themselves or others.
- Attempt to find out what the person is experiencing in order to provide information to clinicians to help support and treat.
- Reduce stressors. This can sometimes mean people living and working in the home. If a supporter or peer has become the target of delusions or hallucinations, it may be best to lessen the contact between the person experiencing the hallucinations and/or delusions.
- Maintaining routines that the person is most familiar with is critical in helping the person remain in touch with reality. Drastic changes to a person's routine can intensify psychotic symptoms. Consistency also helps maintain the person's point of reference in reality and help to prevent and/or reduce paranoia.

****This information does not take the place of medical advice. Please seek a psychiatrist or medical professional if you support a person experiencing a mental health challenge.****



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Tips for Supporting Individuals Experiencing **Psychosis** (Continued)

- There are techniques and strategies that can be modeled or suggested to people that can help them cope with psychotic symptoms. For example, you may recommend to someone experiencing auditory hallucinations to try wearing head phones and listening to music or books on tape to “drown out” auditory hallucinations. Develop activities that can help distract from the hallucinations or delusions, make a tape of people saying nice things about the person for them to listen to, teach the person to say “STOP! I’m not going to listen to you!” when they are experiencing auditory hallucinations and encourage physical stimulation and movement.
- Always be mindful of medical causes and medication related psychotic symptoms. Keep close communication with prescribing doctors regarding changes to the person’s symptoms (both good changes and bad changes). Make sure the person’s medical diagnoses and medication lists are updated when changes occur and track for changes in behavior when new medications are started or medications are lowered or stopped.

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