

De-escalation Strategies for Care Providers

Behavioral Health Symptoms and Crisis Situations

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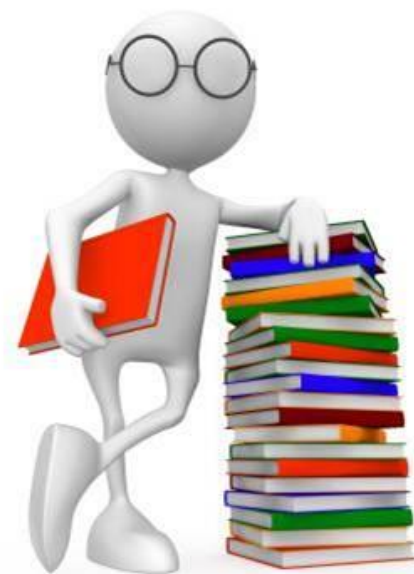
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Learning Objectives

Transforming
Lives

- Self awareness and self control
- How do we influence behavior?
- Understanding and responding to behaviors and symptoms
- Supportive interventions



Behavioral Health In Our Community

- 1 in 4 adults in the United States experiences mental illness in a given year
- 1 in 17 adults has a serious, chronic mental health disorder such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, or Major Depressive Disorder (National Alliance on Mental Illness, March 2013)
- In 2009, 23.5 million people (9.3% of population 12 years of age and older) needed treatment for a substance use disorder (SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health)



Self Awareness

- In any situation, the only thing you have complete control over is yourself



- We work in a profession that provides care for individuals who will experience crisis
- Successful de-escalation begins with us – our attitudes, beliefs, and actions

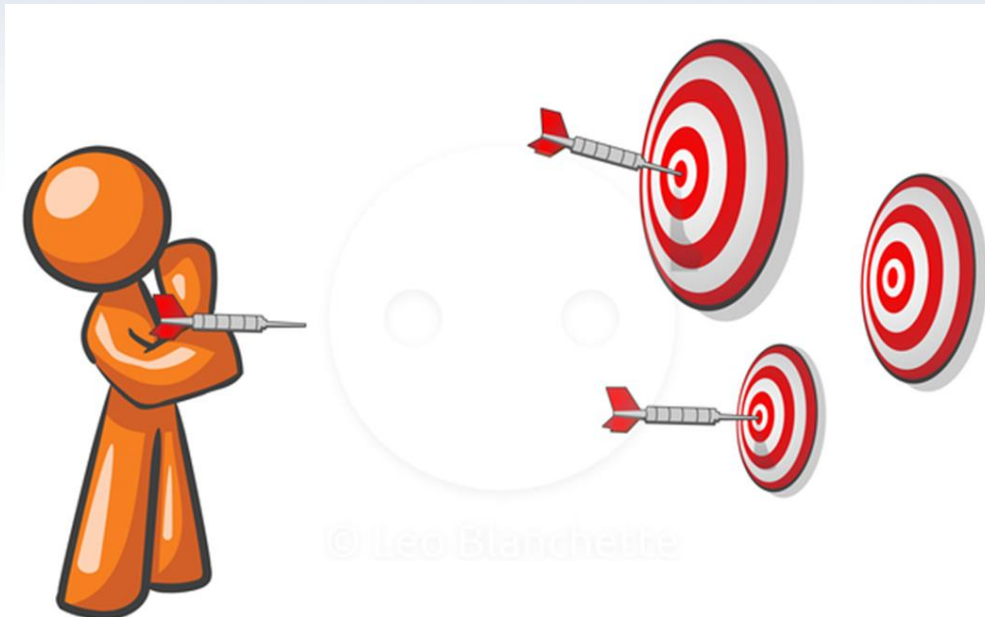
Personal Feelings Impact Care and Communication

- Transference and Counter-transference
 - An individual's positive or negative feelings associated with another person or a past experience may be transferred onto us
 - We may project our own positive or negative feelings from past experiences onto the individual



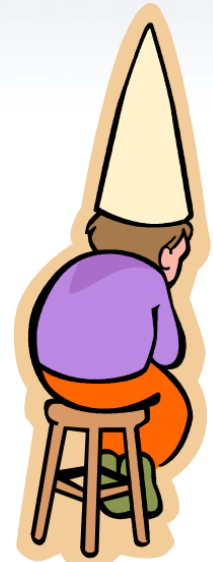
Self Awareness

- What are my triggers and buttons?
 - This person is challenging what I love or hate
 - This person is violating my sense of morality



Under and Over Reaction

- Failure to protect the safety of an individual through inaction
- Failure to set verbal, physical limits due to fear, avoidance, or other reasons
- Destructive attitudes or actions
- Withdrawal of a caring manner toward an individual
- A physical intervention that hurts an individual
- A punitive reaction



Self Control



- I don't have to get into a power struggle
- I don't have to give back what I get
- It's not personal
- I know what my triggers are

How Can I be Proactive?

- Be aware of your Internal Self
 - Biases, beliefs, moods
 - Reaction to stress
- Be aware of your Environment
 - Location, proximity, potential weapons
- Be aware of the Other Person
 - Notice and respond to cues about emotion and behavior

Understanding Behaviors

- Everyone has thoughts, feelings, and needs



- We are more impulsive when we are in crisis
- People may not realize they are out of control
- Behaviors are a way to get needs met
- We need to match our interventions to the needs behind the behaviors

Identifying and Responding to Behaviors

Transforming
Lives

- What is the need behind the behavior?
 - FEAR
 - MANIPULATION
 - FRUSTRATION
 - INTIMIDATION



FEAR

- How do they look?
 - Freeze, cower, hide
 - Tense posture
 - Fight or flight mode



Reducing Fear

- Helping the person feel safe
 - Stay relaxed with your hands in full view
 - Stand slightly off to the side and far enough away that you do not appear to pose a physical threat to the person
 - Keep your voice soft and low
 - Use short phrases, 5 words or less
 - Explain your actions before you take them

Not this



Transforming
Try this



MANIPULATION

- Person may make an initially calm request that cannot be granted
- Statements and behaviors designed to provoke a response
- Promote confusion



Working Through Manipulation

- Stay relaxed and assume a closed posture
- Turn slightly away, but do not turn your back
- Display subtle gestures of disinterest or disapproval
- Avoid direct eye contact, instead look at their shoulders, hairline, or chin
- Keep your voice low
- Respond like a broken record, or minimize response

No



Transforming
Lives
Yes



FRUSTRATION

- Tense posture
- Fixed, focus glare
- Large, clenched gestures



Reducing Frustration

- Helping the person regain control
 - Square your shoulders, keep your back straight and your chin up
 - Keep hands visible, with palms out
 - Stay out of striking range
 - Maintain eye contact and focus on the person when you speak
 - Keep your words clear and voice low
 - Stick to repetitive directives of 5 words or less

Not this



Transforming
Do this Lives



INTIMIDATION

- Presents as physically menacing
- Clear demands that cannot be granted
- Threats of physical assault



Defusing Intimidation

- Maintain safety
 - Be relaxed but ready, do not appear fearful
 - Have an escape route
 - Do not use large gestures
 - Keep your voice emotionless and matter-of-fact
 - Your speech should be clear with direct statements
 - Make eye contact sparingly, do not stare

Not this



Transforming
Lives
Do this instead



Identifying and Responding to Symptoms

Transforming
Lives

- Personality Disorders
- Mania/Hypomania
- Psychosis
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-Traumatic Stress
- Dementia
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Personality Disorders

- Anger, depression, anxiety, mood swings
- Sensitivity to rejection, criticism, abandonment
- Easily overwhelmed, frustrated, and agitated
- Difficulty tolerating distress
- Behaviors to elicit care, attention, validation from others



Response Plan: Personality Disorders

- Avoid power struggles
- Limit emotionally charged responses
- Avoid threats, ultimatums, or excessive restrictions
- Remain matter-of-fact and neutral
- Give realistically available choices as often as possible
- Check back in with the person often

Mania/Hypomania

- Extreme mood swings and behaviors
- Euphoric, energized, expansive, overconfident
- Feeling 'invincible' to harm and superior to others
- Labile, anxious, guarded
- Impatient, easily frustrated
- Confusion as to why others are concerned



Response Plan: Mania/Hypomania

- Plan for unpredictability
- Low stimulus level
- Keep directions short and simple
- Don't argue
- Say "you're right" as much as possible

Psychosis

- Hallucinations and delusions
- May respond to auditory hallucinations
- Hyper-vigilant, fearful, self protective
- Religious preoccupation
- Withdrawn, inward focus
- Self-harm or suicidality in response to command hallucinations

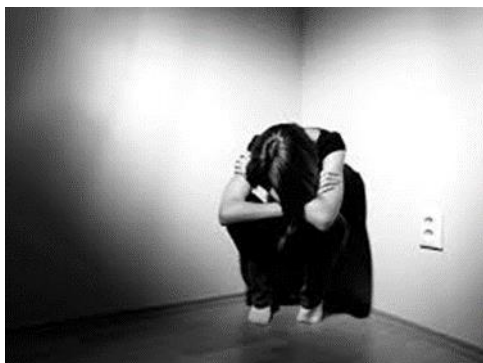


Response Plan: Psychosis

- Approach slowly with non-threatening body language
- Ask them what they need
- Don't contradict or argue about their beliefs
- Keep stimulus low in the environment

Depression

- Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless
- Change/loss of perspective
- Multiple life stressors
- Suicidal ideation
- May or may not have identifiable emotions but feel “empty” or “blank”



Response Plan: Depression

- Ask what they need, explain what you can do for them
- Avoid excessive restrictions
- Be kind and reassuring
- Explain what is happening
- Connect with family, friends, social resources for acute support and additional resource

Anxiety

- Irritability, distractibility
- Feelings of dread
- Overwhelmed with thoughts and emotions
- Difficulty making decisions and processing information
- Panic attacks
- Self medication with alcohol or drugs

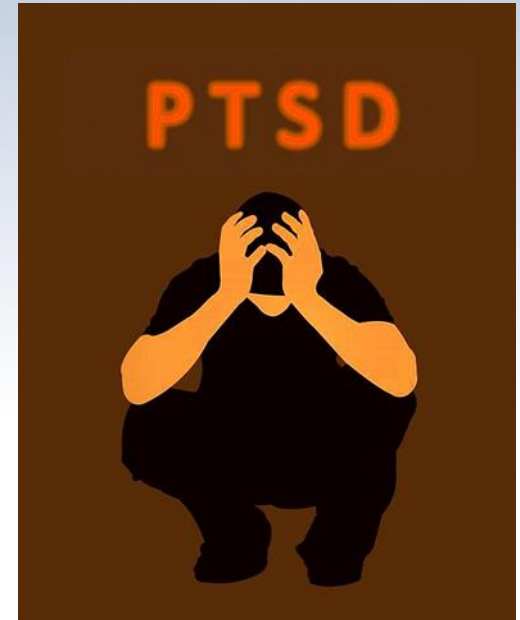


Response Plan: Anxiety

- Treat physical symptoms as real
- Be reassuring, provide information about what will happen next
- Ask what would be most helpful to them
- Ask what has worked in the past
- Discuss recent and current situation in brief, neutral way

Post-Traumatic Stress

- Depression, hopelessness, helplessness
- Anxiety
- Irritability, outbursts of anger
- Difficulty sleeping, concentrating
- Suicidal thoughts and actions
- Hypervigilance
- Flashbacks
- Self medication with alcohol or drugs



Response Plan: Post-Traumatic Stress

- Give space
- Reduce external stimuli
- Anticipate and ask about triggers
- Ask what would be most helpful to them
- Ask what has worked for them in the past
- Involve family, friends, support network

Dementia

- Confusion, disorientation
- Poor memory
- Irritability, rapid mood changes
- Anxiety
- Aggression resulting from confusion or fear
- Vulnerability to medical complications



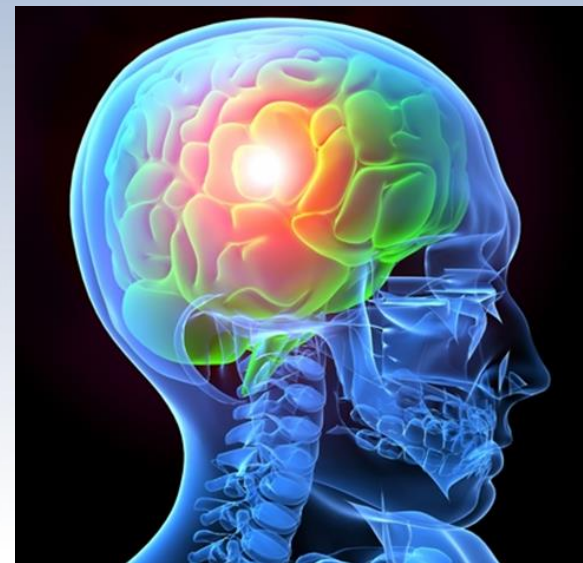
Response Plan: Dementia

- Create a calm environment
- Speak slowly, take your time
- Be reassuring and provide comfort
- Ask permission
- Ask what would be most helpful to them

Traumatic Brain Injury

Transforming
Lives

- Headache
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory impairments
- Attention deficits
- Mood swings and emotional disturbance
- Easily frustrated
- Impaired cognitive functions
- Difficulty with speech or communication
- Impulsivity
- Agitation and restlessness
- Hallucinations



Response Plan: Traumatic Brain Injury

- Anticipate confusion and reactivity
- Speak briefly and clearly
- Direct attention away from confusion rather than attempting to argue or convince
- Explain what will happen and what you will do next
- Minimize stimuli

Responding to Behaviors and Symptoms

Transforming
Lives

- Everyone has needs
- Behaviors are an attempt to get those needs met
- Acknowledge and attempt to meet the need behind the behavior
- In a crisis situation, we are not our best selves
- Respond to the person, not the crisis