



Communicating with a Person with a Brain Disorder

A poet has defined mental illness as "the crippling of the organ of reciprocity." Certainly one of its most characteristic aspects is the difficulty, even breakdown, of communication between the stricken person and others.

Communicating effectively does not solve all problems or make your relative well, but it usually makes things better. It won't make as much difference as you wish it could, and this is important to remember. Communicating in specific ways is very important for the mentally ill who are confused, can't always understand, or may misinterpret. Example: "Do you think you could take out the trash?" may receive the reply, "I don't think about the trash at all," or "Of course I think I could do it," followed by not taking out the trash

A Person with a brain disorder (may)...

- Be fearful
- Have trouble with "reality"
- Be insecure
- Have trouble concentrating
- Be over-stimulated
- Easily become agitated
(not to be confused with dangerous)
- Have poor judgment
- Be preoccupied
- Be withdrawn
- Have changing emotions
- Have confused plans
- Have little empathy for others
- Believe delusions
- Have low self-esteem and motivation

So you need to...

- Be simple, truthful, not sarcastic
- Stay calm
- Be accepting
- Be brief; repeat
- Limit input; not force discussion
- Recognize agitation, allow retreat
- Not always expect rational discussion
- First get his/her attention
- Initiate conversation
- Disregard
- Stick to one plan
- Recognize this as a symptom
- Ignore; change subject; don't argue
- Remain positive