



LEAFLET 5

How do I cope with the symptoms of Schizophrenia?

This leaflet is one of a series that have been designed to give you a better understanding of Mental Illness.

This leaflet provides sufferers with information on how to cope with the symptoms of schizophrenia. These symptoms are also known as 'psychotic symptoms.'

Please refer to Leaflet 2, where these symptoms are described.

It would probably be of help if you ask a key worker to explain how this leaflet relates to you.



The symptoms experienced by people with schizophrenia are sometimes described as 'Psychotic Symptoms.' This means that their ability to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary is seriously affected. This is also known as 'psychosis.'

There are two main types of symptoms, positive and negative.

Some people have more trouble with positive symptoms, for example:

- Hearing voices
- Having unusual ideas.

Other sufferers are more troubled by negative symptoms, for example:

- Lack of energy;
- Social withdrawal.

Carers often get more troubled by the negative symptoms, because this can seem like you are just 'being lazy' or 'not bothering.'

Positive symptoms usually seem more like part of an illness, so carers can sympathise more easily with these – even though they may find these symptoms quite worrying. In this leaflet we give some suggestions for how you might cope with both positive and negative symptoms.

COPING WITH POSITIVE SYMPTOMS

Blocking out voices

This can sometimes be achieved by:

- Playing loud music;
- Using a walkman;
- Talking out loud to someone;
- Singing;
- Reciting a poem.

Distraction techniques

These include:

- Playing cards;
- Reading;
- Completing jigsaws;
- Puzzle books;
- Listening to radio talk programmes;
- Doing things that require concentration.

Relaxation Techniques

Try to keep as calm as possible by:

- Taking a bath;
- Going for a walk;
- Doing relaxation exercises.

Denial

It sometimes helps for you to remind yourself that the voices aren't real.

Discuss what is happening with someone you trust.

It may help to keep a diary of what the voices say. This may help you to see that the voices contain ideas which are important to you.

Delusions

Try to find things to do that are not affected by your delusional ideas; it often helps if you can keep in contact with ordinary, everyday activities.

However real your delusion may seem, do not act upon it.

Discuss your ideas with a therapist you trust. Be cautious about telling other people, they may find your ideas upsetting – or amusing.

COPING WITH NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS

A gradual step by step approach is best.

Having schizophrenia can make it hard to:

- Think straight;
- Keep going;
- Take an interest in other people.

This can be demoralising for you and is frustrating for your carer.

You will recover gradually but do not expect too much too soon.

Make a note of things you used to enjoy doing and people you used to see.

Set yourself a target of trying to do something enjoyable each week.

Set yourself a target time for getting up each day. It may be quite late in the morning (or even later!) but try to stick to it. Gradually, over the weeks you can try to get up a bit earlier.

Remember that if your family seem to be 'nagging' you to do things they are only trying to help you.

Schizophrenia slows you down but being inactive does not make it go away.

Personal Notes
