A GUIDE TO EXAMINING AGITATION

Commonly experienced by people diagnosed with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and dementia, depression and anxiety disorders.

WHAT IS AGITATION?
A behavioural syndrome or set of symptoms or behaviours

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF AGITATION?
Agitation can be frequent, where some people experience around three mild to moderate episodes a month.

1. uncooperativeness
2. inner tension
3. restlessness
4. anxiety
5. aggressive behaviour
6. feeling uneasy
7. short-tempered
8. talkative

HOW TO PREVENT AGITATION
Take maintenance medication
Act FAST when symptoms start
Seek psychological therapy

WHAT PATIENTS CAN DO
1. Self-manage symptoms
2. Prescribed medication
3. Seek peer support
4. Find information
5. Contact mental health services
6. Develop a crisis plan

Avoid:
- Drinking alcohol
- Taking illegal substances
- Smoking

WHAT PROFESSIONALS CAN DO
1. Use fast acting, effective treatments without sedation
2. Divert people to mental health services
3. Ensure the person’s and other people’s safety
4. Use effective de-escalation techniques
5. Help the person manage their emotions and distress

Avoid:
- Police custody
- Coercive practices, such as seclusion and restraint
- Involuntary medication

WHAT CARERS CAN DO
1. Recognise symptoms early
2. Create a quiet and safe space
3. Listen emphatically and offer reassurance
4. Avoid negative comments
5. Seek advice and support from a professional

1. Roberto J. Graia Canales A, Blankhorn-Hazzall S., Crellen Bolkeanus A and Judge D. Characterizing the experience of agitation in experts by experience with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. BMC Psychiatry (2016) 18:104