**M6.WS5 - ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH CRISES**

Crises interventions differ from one situation to another, depending on the mental health condition of the individual. There are a number of ways how to address a mental health crisis appropriately, and the following role-play exercises aim to engage the participants to actively involve themselves in handling a crisis situation.

* For each of the scenarios below, ask two participants to stand in front of the group to do a role-play;
* Ask one participant to act out one of the mental health situations below;
* Give the relevant *Do’s & Don’ts* on a piece of paper to the other participant, and ask them to deal with the person in front of them according to the guidance below;
* After each role-play, it is important to de-role each participant and bring them back again in their persona. Then involve the whole group to give feedback about the role-play and about the responses to the crisis presented;
* The facilitator is to engage in the discussion to ensure that the appropriate responses where delivered to the group and have been understood.

***Role Play 1 - How to assist a person who is suicidal?***

Do’s:

* Remain patient and calm whilst the person is disclosing feelings;
* Listen with a non-judgmental approach;
* Accept what is being said and remain neutral;
* Ask open ended questions to explore further the reason behind the suicidal thoughts;
* Use reflection to summarize what the person is saying to show that you understood;
* Empathize continuously with the person;
* Check whether the person has made a plan to carry out suicide by asking direct questions;
* Ask directly if they have decided when to carry out the plan;
* Ask directly whether they took any actions to obtain the means to carry out suicide;
* Ask directly whether there was any recent use of drugs and alcohol;
* Ask directly whether they felt this way before and have attempted suicide in the past;
* Discuss a safety plan with the person.

Don’ts:

* Engage in argument with the person or debate their suicidal thoughts;
* Discuss if suicide is right or wrong;
* Use guilt or threats to prevent suicide;
* Minimize the problems that the suicidal person is presenting;
* Give vague reassurances such as “everything is going to be alright”;
* Interrupt with stories of your own;
* Communicate lack of interest or negative attitude with body language;
* Call their bluff;
* Attempt to diagnose the person with a mental illness.

***Role Play 2 - How to assist a person who is engaging in self-injury?***

Do’s:

* Use a calm tone of voice;
* Express your concerns directly that the person may be injuring themselves;
* Ask about self-injury;
* Keep in mind that self-injury is a very private thing and it is hard to talk about;
* Avoid expressing a strong emotional response of anger, fear repulsion or frustration;
* Be supportive without being permissive of the behaviour;

Don’ts:

* Minimize the person’s feelings or problems;
* Use statements indicating that the person’s problem is not that serious;
* Try to solve the person’s problems for them;
* Touch the person without permission;
* Refer to the person with a slang verb such as “self-cutter” or “self-mutilator”’
* Accuse the person of attention seeking;
* Make the person feel guilty about the effects of their self-injury on others;
* Set pacts with the person to stop injuring themselves;
* Give ultimatums to the person;
* Offer pills, drugs or alcohol to the person;

***Role Play 3 - How to assist a person who is in a deep state of anxiety or having a panic attack?***

Do’s:

* Stay calm throughout the conversation;
* Speak to the person in a reassuring but firm tone;
* Speak clearly, slowly, and use short sentences;
* Acknowledge with the person that they are having a panic attack;
* Acknowledge that the terror feels real, but assure that a panic attack is not life-threatening;
* Invite the person to sit down somewhere comfortably;
* Ask directly what the person thinks it might help;
* Reassure that they are safe and that the panic attack will pass;

Don’ts:

* Minimize the experience of the person;
* Bombard the person with a lengthy conversation that can be overwhelming;
* Tell the person to calm down or relax;
* Ask the person why are they panicking;
* Seem irritated or judgemental;
* Try to distract them temporarily from the panic

***Role Play 4 - How to assist a person in a severe psychotic state (e.g. having hallucinations or delusions)?***

Do’s:

* Remain calm during the entire conversation;
* Communicate in a simple, clear, and concise manner;
* Speak with a quiet, non-threatening tone of voice;
* Comply with requests unless *unsafe or unreasonable;*
* *Answer questions;*
* *Ask the person is there is anyone they trust;*
* *Evaluate whether the person is safe to be alone or not;*
* *Try to de-escalate the situation as much as possible;*

*Don’ts:*

* Panic or overreact;
* Contradict the person that the hallucinations or delusions are not real;
* Indicate any medical treatment to the person;
* Make threats or put ultimatums;

***Role Play 5 - How to assist a person under heavy influence of drugs or alcohol?***

Do’s:

* Stay calm and communicate using an empathic tone;
* Monitor for danger;
* Ensure the person’s safety;
* Check the person’s breathing and monitor that it is at regular intervals;
* If person is physically unwell call an ambulance

Don’ts:

* attempt to constrain the person;
* give the person any medication, even aspirin;
* give the person food, coffee, tea, or other liquids, due to risk for choking;
* induce vomiting;
* tell the person to have a cold shower;
* assume that an intoxicated person who passes out will sleep it off;
* leave the person alone;
* let a person operate a car, motorcycle or bicycle;

***Role Play 6 - How to assist a person with an aggressive behaviour?***

Do’s:

* Speak with a calm, gentle and caring tone of voice;
* Use positive phrases instead of negative ones, such as “stay calm” instead of saying “don’t fight”;
* Be aware that the person’s fear or symptoms causing their aggression might be aggravated if you take steps such as involving the police;
* Consider taking a break from the conversation to allow the person to calm down;
* Ask the person to sit down if they are standing;
* If the aggression escalates, remove yourself from the situation and call for help;

Don’ts:

* Behave in a nervous manner;
* Respond in a hostile, disciplinary or challenging manner;
* Threaten or argue with the person;
* Restrict the person’s movement;

