

## II. WAYS TO HELP

There are a number of ways to help a person with mental illnesses.

- 1) **Medical Treatment:** Medicine is the only way to change strange behaviour quickly. Sometimes people need a short stay in hospital. Another less common treatment is electroconvulsive therapy. This is sometimes called "shock therapy".
- 2) **Talk therapy:** Talk therapy or counselling helps the person to talk about his difficulties and to feel that someone else understands and cares for him.
- 3) **Routine activities:** Keeping the person involved with the family routines can help the person return to their normal behaviour. This means asking the person with mental illness to do simple repetitive activities which she did before the illness such as cleaning, gathering wood, or working in the garden.
- 4) **Working with the Family and Community:** Often families and close friends are the people who can best help a person with mental illness. It is important to teach them about mental illness and how to help. One of the ways to help is to use routine daily activities in a familiar place.
- 5) **Traditional Healers:** There are many kinds of healers and sometimes they can help both the person with mental illness and the family.



The next few pages describe more detailed information about how to help.

### 1. MEDICAL TREATMENT

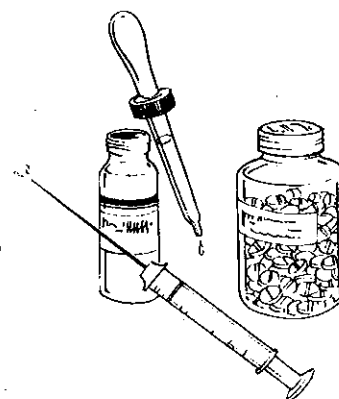
#### a. **Medicine**

Medicine is most helpful for those who are very ill and have one or more of the "Warning Signs" listed on page 19. Medicine does not "cure" the mental illness like antibiotic drugs cure an infection, but it changes thoughts and behaviour and can make people feel well again.

Different medicines are given for different strange behaviours. Some medicine helps make the person with mental illness think normally so they no longer have strange thoughts. Other medicines change behaviour-calms down the overactive person or helps a person who does not want to do anything to start doing daily activities again.

Medicine can be given by pills, in a liquid or by injection.

Some pills take a long time to start working, 10 days to 3 weeks. If an injection is given it can work more quickly, usually within hours. Generally, if the medicine is working the person with mental illness should begin to be easier to talk to, feel more calm, and their strange behaviour should decrease though it may not go away completely.



Sleeping medication is helpful for some people, but it is often given when not really needed. When a person with severe mental illness does not sleep for several weeks, their thinking can become even more confused and their behaviour more unusual because of lack of sleep. They may need sleeping medicine for a short time so they can get a better rest. Persons should not stay on sleep medication for several months. Sleeping medicine is not needed when people feel "nervous" or unhappy. Sleeping medicine in this case may make things worse.



Giving medicine can easily become a substitute for giving personal interest and concern—especially when long lines of people are waiting.

**INFO**  
**CBR**

Things to Remember About Medicine and Mental Illness

- Sometimes people need to be on medicine for many months or years, even when they feel and act like normal.
- If they stop taking the medicine, the problems may start again.
- The person often does not see why they must keep taking the medicine and needs encouragement.
- Usually the more disturbed the person, the more the medicine is needed.



The CBR worker can help motivate the person to take his medicine and help his family to understand why the person should take medicine. It is important to check to see if and when the person follows the doctor's instructions when taking the medicine. The CBR worker can also teach the person and the family how to check that the medicine is working.

Because medicine is expensive the CBR worker might need to find community resources to help the person buy the medicine. Often people become sick again or never get well because they do not have the money to buy the medicine after the first few weeks.

### Side Effects of Medicine

Medicines used to help persons with mental illness are strong. Sometimes they can produce unwanted problems called side effects.

#### The medicine may cause:

- sleepiness in the middle of the day
- a very dry mouth
- walk very stiffly for no reason
- skin that turns purple in the sun
- a tongue that sticks out

#### Ways to Help:

- do not drive or use electrical equipment
- use gum or hard candies to increase saliva
- see the doctor
- keep out of the sun , wear a large hat
- see the doctor



If a person has any of these side effects, take them to the doctor or health centre immediately. Sometimes the doctor may give another medicine to stop the side effects so that the person is taking two kinds of medicine. This often happens when the person is walking or moving stiffly.

**b. Electroconvulsive Treatment**

Another treatment given for severe mental illness is electroconvulsive treatment or shock treatment. This treatment is very effective for changing strange behaviour quickly and can help the person return to doing routine activities. It must be given in a hospital or clinic and with medical drugs that relax the person and put them to sleep while they get the treatment. It does not work for all kinds of mental illness and special equipment and a trained doctor are needed.

Naswar is a 35 year old woman with 6 children. She lives in a rural area near one of the famous religious pilgrimage sites where a famous teacher is buried. Although she prays every day she is not known by her neighbours as a overly religious. Suddenly one day she started hearing a voice from the holy shrine telling her to visit. When she arrived she "saw" the famous religious teacher dressed in white. She thought that he was speaking through her mouth and she began to say his name over and over again. She also screamed and threw her hand in the air sometimes crying out to "her people". She stopped eating, taking care of her children and spent all day at the shrine. Her family took her to the hospital and she was given medicine and 4 sessions of shock therapy. Within 3 weeks she was back home taking care of the children and did not have any more problems.

**c. When Should A Person With Mental Illness Go to Hospital ?**

Safety for the person with mental illness and for others around them is the most important thing when considering how to help. Many people who are severely ill can be cared for in their communities with support, but sometimes they need to go to hospital.

The person may need to go to hospital if:

1. He might hurt himself - either by a suicide attempt or by unsafe behaviour like wandering in traffic or refusing to eat for many days.
2. He might harm other people- chase them with a knife, hit them or start a fire for example.
3. He does not know the difference between what is real and what he is imagining. He may also not be able to understand simple words or follow instructions something he used to understand very well.
4. The person is very ill and there are no family members or neighbours willing to care for the person. If this person does not go to hospital he might have an accident or be harmed.



Hospitals can help by protecting the mentally ill person and others. During a short stay in hospital, the doctor can find the right medicine and make sure that it works well. Electroconvulsive treatment may also be given.

Hospitals do not help everyone. Hospitals can be crowded and the person may not get much personal care or attention because there are not enough staff to work with each patient. Hospitals are often far away from the person's home and the family may not be able to visit. That means that the person will be lonely and surrounded by strangers. Also the family will not be able to learn how to take care of the person with mental illness to help him when he returns home. Sometimes family want a person to go into hospital for medication but if the family can not afford the medicines when the person goes home, the hospital does not help. For all of these reasons, the person's life may be worse in the hospital than it was in the community.





## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### Going to Hospital

In each of the following situations, think about whether the person could be helped by a stay in hospital. Check Yes (Y) or No (N) beside each one. If the person:

- has headaches and pains in his body and complains about feeling sick. The doctor says he is healthy and the person can still do routine activities.
- is sitting in a corner of the room and has not eaten in seven days and now refuses to have anything to drink.
- thinks that her neighbour is stealing the family's chickens and spends hours staring out the window keeping watch.
- has not slept in 3 days and but continues to work on building his house all through the night. He has spent all the family's money buying tiles. He talks very fast and most of the time it does not make any sense.
- talks to himself and walks up and down the yard. Only talks to others when he eats his rice and often yells at them because the rice is not tasty.
- yells at the neighbour and shakes her fist for no real reason
- hears voices telling him to run out and stop the buses on the road and look for his daughter who died over 10 years ago.
- has been crying for many weeks and follows family members around all day complaining and worrying. The family is angry.

Y N

	Y	N
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## 2. TALK THERAPY



Talking as a form of help is used to find out from the person what they think are their problems, how they are feeling and what they want to change so they can stay well. Talk therapy can help people with a mental illness to understand why they are ill and why they need help.

It is also a way to encourage and support them while they are ill. Special forms of talk therapy are called psychotherapy and counselling. These are usually done by a trained health worker or doctor.

Many persons with a severe mental illness can not answer questions or their answers do not make any sense. In this case talk therapy IS NOT USEFUL. Talk therapy is also not useful if the person does not think that they have problem or that they do not know why their family is worried about them.



### LEARNING ACTIVITY Helping Mr. Woo

Sometimes a person's behaviour and thinking problems are not connected to the "real problem". Talk therapy can often help uncover the real problem and make the person feel better.

Mr. Woo owns a successful shop and is very generous in helping the poor. He has 4 children who have all moved to the capital city where they run successful businesses. His wife died about one year ago and since then he has worked even harder than usual. Although he used to be very active in his community, he has quit attending dinners and meetings lately. Over the last 6 months he went to many doctors for the pain in his chest. He had many expensive tests but no one found anything wrong with him. Mr. Woo worried so much about his chest pain that he did not sleep and only talked about his pain. The real problem was his sadness after the death of his wife.

As a CBR field worker you have been asked to see Mr. Woo and try to help him.



Divide into small groups of four. Have two people play Mr. Woo and the CBR field worker in a talk therapy session. The other two people are observers. The observers should comment on which parts of the talk therapy seemed to help Mr. Woo.

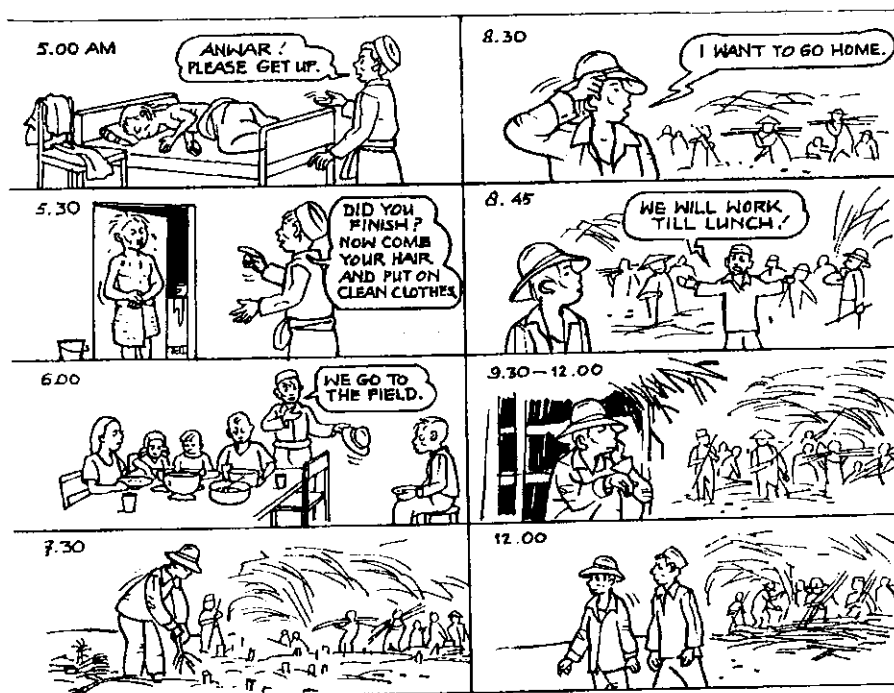
### 3. ROUTINE ACTIVITIES

Daily activities in the home and neighbourhood can be used to help the person with mental illness to get well. How do they help ?

Routine activities:

- are very familiar to the person with mental illness and therefore easier for her to do when her thinking is not clear.
- help the person to pay attention to real, not "crazy" thoughts.
- provides a routine for the person's day. Often a person with mental illness acts like she has nothing to do or to contribute to the family.
- make the person think about the activity she is doing and not her strange thoughts. This helps her avoid strange behaviours.
- help the person finish and "succeed" at something easy. This helps her to feel better about herself. If families do everything for a person with mental illness, she will not have this feeling of satisfaction.
- helps others see the person with mental illness as more "normal".

A planned routing helps the person with mental illness participate in work activities



**Personal Care Activities:** The person with mental illness should be gently reminded to bath, comb their hair and to change her clothes. These are routine activities that every one does but often people with mental illness lose interest or have too much trouble thinking to be able to do them easily.

- The morning activities of getting up, going to the toilet and bathing should be done at the same time and in the same order everyday.
- Clothes should be placed beside the person so it is easy for them to put on the right clothes.
- The person should be encouraged and helped to do these personal care activities even if she has no where to go or nothing special to do.



**Household Activities:** With encouragement by someone she knows and trusts, a person with a severe mental illness can begin to assist with simple things like, making tea, loading a wagon or sweeping the floor.

Sometimes you have to "make up" some work to be done (that is not needed at the time) by the person so that she is not sitting doing nothing for a long time. For example, prepare vegetables early or put all the dishes on the table and get the person with mental illness to wash them and put them back on the rack. The work you "make up" should be simple and should be able to last at least 20-30 minutes. The work should also be something that is always done in the household.



## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### Choosing Routine Activities That Help

Household activities and personal care activities are two types of routine activity. But they can be done differently in different countries and even different areas in the same country. People with mental illness are helped most by activities with which they are very familiar and which are common in their neighbourhood.

Choose a district or local area. In a group have the members make a list of:

- a) specific personal care activities (in detail such as putting on a shirt or sarong not just getting dressed);
- b) household activities that women do;
- c) household activities that men do;
- d) household activities both men and women do.



### Things to Remember When Helping a Person with Routine Activities



The person should be encouraged to do as much as is possible for himself even if it takes longer or is not done as well as if a family member did it.

The person with a mental illness may need to take a break while doing an activity because she can not pay attention for a long time. But encourage her to return to the activity or give her an other activity to do as a change.

The time spent each day doing activities by a person with a mental illness should increase. It is much better for him to be busy then doing nothing.

When helping a person with routine activities, you should :

- stand in front of the person when talking to her and call her by her name;
- speak slowly using simple words and gestures. Sometimes it helps to show the person what to do first;

- use activities that can be stopped and started without a problem like sweeping;
- be patient and wait, for the person to start;
- show the person one step at a time if she don't seem to know what to do.
- each time the person completes one step of the activity correctly, tell her "that is very good"; and
- give encouragement to the person to finish the activity;



## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### Using Routine Activities

In groups of two, read the following case studies (which are based on real situations). Answer the questions below:

Fatima is a 25 years old and has 3 children. Her husband works at the brick kiln and only come homes about every 3 months. Over the past 6 months she has become very suspicious of her friends and women neighbours, saying that they want to steal her husband. She is very "jumpy" and spends her time looking out the window and door and not doing her housework. Now Fatima thinks the neighbours are trying to kill her and her children so she will not let the children go outside. She keeps the food hidden and often forgets where it is. When the children complain, she tells them it is better to be hungry than poisoned.

Hameed is a 26 year old community development worker. Over the past few months since his father's death he has become really quiet and hardly ever talks. He has lost interest in his community work and has missed several meetings. He wears the same clothes over, and over even if they are dirty and he does not seem to bath regularly. Once after a planning meeting for the next year's activities, one of his friends found him crying in the back room saying that it was "hopeless".

1. What are Fatima's and Hameed's problems ?
2. How do these problems stop Fatima and Hameed from doing their everyday routine activities ?
3. How could you help Fatima and Hameed by using routine activities ?

## Making Activities Simpler

A person with a severe mental illness often does not think clearly. His thinking may be too fast, too slow, or confused. Often he does not remember things he was just told. It is difficult for him to concentrate on activities and do complicated things like making plans for a meeting or ordering new supplies for the shop.

Even routine tasks may be difficult for him to do in the same way he did them before. For example, he may begin to eat and then get distracted and forget to finish.

Because of these problems in thinking, it may be necessary to remind the person how to do simple activities that he could do easily before he became mentally ill. The best way to do this is to make a task into small steps like the example below.

- The activity should have no more than 5-6 steps.
- A family member may have to remind the person about the next step.
- Sometimes the person can only do one or two parts of the task and a family member may have to complete the rest.

Here is an example of the routine activity of boiling tea with each small step described:



### First Activity - Boiling Water

Get the bucket for the water.  
Fill the bucket with water from the pot.  
Bring the bucket to the stove.  
Get the kettle in the corner.  
Fill the kettle with some water.  
Place the kettle on the stove.  
Light the stove  
Wait for the water to boil.

### Second Activity-Fixing Tea

Get tea from the shelf.  
Get sugar from the shelf.  
Put tea in pot.  
Pour hot water onto tea.  
Get a glass from the shelf.  
Put in the sugar.  
Pour tea into glass.  
Drink tea.

### Third Activity-Saying Hello

Call the person (Nasar) to come  
Have him face the guest  
Speak to him slowly :  
    "Nasar, Look up"  
When he does, say "Good"  
    "Nasar", say "Hello Kassan"  
Wait for a response  
Repeat the instructions  
    "Nasar", say "Hello Kassan"  
With any attempt to speak or look at the Kassan say  
"Good". If Nasar does not respond, say "Thank you  
Nasar for coming to see Kassan".  
Repeat steps with each new visitor or again later.

## 4. USING FAMILIAR PLACES

For people who have had mental illness for a long time or who are very ill, the goal is to make their behaviour manageable for the family and the neighbours. This will help the person with mental illness remain out of hospital and live in the community. Staying in the community can be better for the person with mental illness because:

- the family is there to help them;
- the person can keep doing her routine activities;
- the familiar environment of her home can be helpful; and,
- it is less costly to the family;
- the hospital stay is usually short and the person returns to the community anyway.

Just like using routine activities helps a person with mental illness become well, helping them to stay in familiar places is also something that community workers and family members can do. Although this may seem simple, it is important because:

- A person with mental illness can be confused or restless and wander around the community. He needs help to show him that his home and local neighbourhood is the safest and best place for him.
- Family members often get frustrated and tired of caring for the person with mental illness. They may want to send him to a relatives home or to hospital.



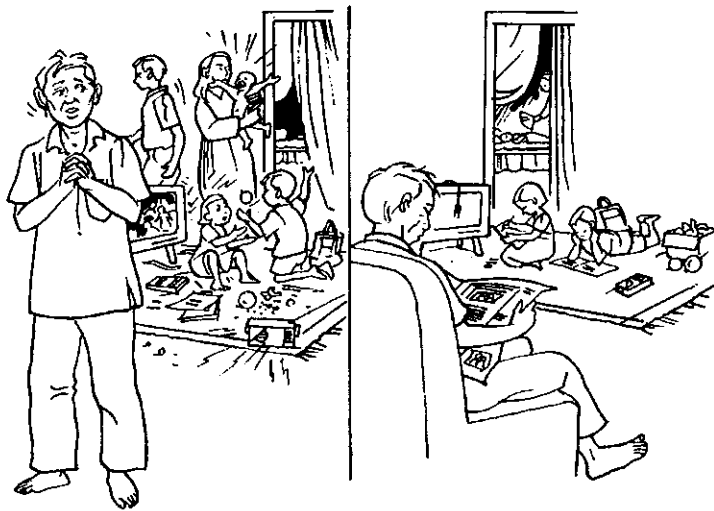
People with mental illness, are often very upset by the thoughts in their heads and the change in their own behaviour. Going to a place with which the person is not familiar can cause the strange behaviour to get worse. This is one reason that people often have more troubles when they first go to hospital than they did when still in the community.

A familiar place can be used to help the person with mental illness feel safer even if his thoughts are strange and he think, for example that people are trying to harm him.

This does not mean that the person should be kept in the same room and never go outside. Being in a new places may upset the person with mental illness, but she should be encouraged to make short visits to places she knows, for example, an understanding relative's house.

## Things to Remember About Using Familiar Places

- A person with mental illness has difficulty paying attention. He can be very upset by loud sounds and busy places. The family should make a place for him in a room where he is most of the time. Choose a place which has less activity and fewer persons going by. This could be in a corner away from the doorway.
- While a quiet place is important, the person needs to have people nearby. Do not lock the person in a back room. The person with mental illness will feel better in a quiet place and needs time to be with one or two family members. This can be outside as well as inside a house.
- Keep the noise down around a person with mental illness. Radios or televisions should be played at a low volume. They should not be in the same room if the person is over active.
- Quiet music can be very soothing especially if it is familiar and something the person likes.



- Use the quiet place to keep some of the person's belongings and things they like to use daily. Try not to remove these things so they are always in the same place.
- Avoid places and situations that the person with mental illness says are upsetting or in which the family can see the person become more upset.

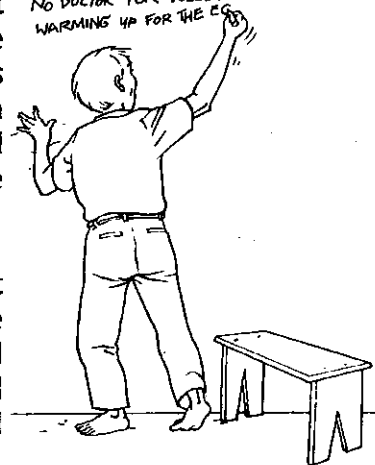


## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### We Do not Want Him At Home-He is Crazy!

Nasir is a clerk and works in a large department store. He came home one day and said he did not want to return to work. His family depends on the money he earned. After sitting at home for one month, he began writing many notes. He wrote all day and all night in his room and when he came out, his family could not understand what he was talking about. He then began to write all over the walls in his room and walk around the house at night when every one else slept. The Health Centre nurse said he had to go to hospital 70 Km away.

BECAUSE IT IS SEEING  
FACES CALLING ME USUALLY  
I PLAYED TWICE FOREVER BUT  
NO DOCTOR FOR VOLLEY BALL  
WARMING UP FOR THE EG



While in hospital he took medicine but otherwise he just sat on a mat on the floor. About a week after starting to take the medicine he quit having strange thoughts and just seemed to be sad and lonely. His family never visited him in the hospital and the doctor asked the Health Centre to find the family and ask them to take Nasir home again.

The health centre nurse asked a CBR field worker to go and see the family. When he met them they did not want to take Nasir back home.

In a small group role play the field worker discussing with the family why Nasir should come home to a familiar place. After the role play make a list of reasons the family do not want him at home. Beside each one write how the CBR worker might answer.

## 5. TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Traditional healers are used by many people in the community for all kinds of illnesses and troubles. They can be very helpful for some people with a mental illness and often their families too. But traditional healers are not helpful for all people with a severe mental illness.

### Ways Traditional Healers Can Help:

Sometimes the traditional healer can calm the person through talk, prayers, reading of sacred books, practical suggestions and natural or herb medicines.

Some healers give the person a spiritual understanding of the mental illness. Information that helps a person to accept why he and not someone else is having problems or how the illness relates to his understanding of God, Fate, or Karma can help some kinds of mental illness.

The traditional healer can help a person with mental illness who has headaches and pain because of "stress" to relax and talk about ways to solve the person's problems. With time, some people with a mental illness will get better on their own. Seeing the traditional healer can make this happen more quickly because the person feels that he has done something to help.



Traditional healers can give support to family members when they are upset by the person with mental illness.

In all of these ways traditional healers can be helpful.

## Some Ways Traditional Healers DO NOT Help

Many people with a severe mental illness are sick a very long time. The healer's talk or medicines will not make them better. Because they are going to the traditional healer, the mentally ill person may not go to the doctor or make not take medicines that are needed.

A traditional healer does not have powerful medicine that can make the strange behaviour quickly go away. Sometimes the traditional healer will give potions which can contain strong drugs which will make the person much worse.



**CAUTION!!!** Some traditional healers give injections. Usually these have only sugar or coloured water not medicine. These do not help. Only injections from doctors or staff of the Health Center should be taken.

Sometimes the healer will tell the family that evil spirits caused the mental illness. Sometimes the family will then try to punish the spirit or the person. For example, the family might tie the person up for months or plunged him in water many times until he can hardly breathe. This will not cure the mental illness and can physically hurt the person with a severe mental illness.

It is important that the CBR worker find out if the family has taken the person to a traditional healer and be respectful of the family's beliefs.

Many families and people with mental illness visit both the traditional healer and the health center. It is important that the doctor knows if the person is taking special medicine from the traditional healer.



**NO!**

Educating the family about mental illness will help them know when the person's mental illness is so severe they should see a doctor rather than go to the traditional healer.

The traditional healer should be recognized as someone who may be able to help the family deal with the problems of keeping a person with mental illness active in the community.