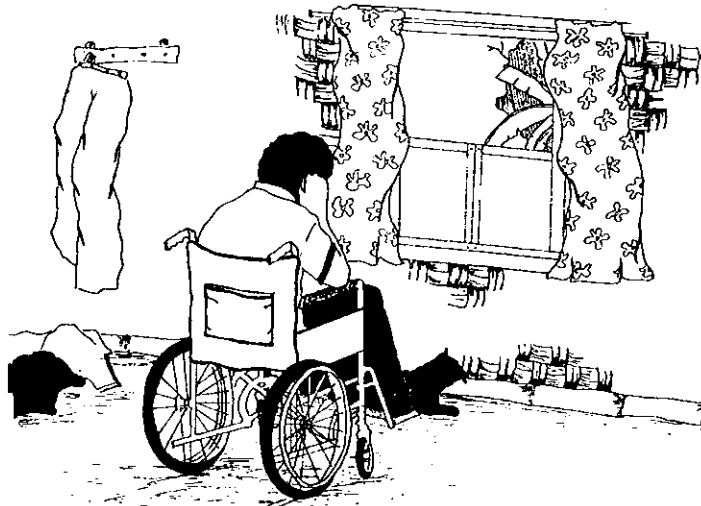


## IV. SPECIAL ISSUES

### 1. MEDICAL PROBLEMS AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Sometimes a person with a medical problem also has mental illness. A person with a broken back can become depressed when he realizes he will never walk again, for example. Or a person who has a severe mental illness may also develop medical problems which are not related to the mental illness, for instance arthritis or diabetes. Another problem is a person who has medical and mental illness problems because of drug or alcohol abuse.



#### How to Help

Because a person with a severe mental illness and other medical problems is very difficult to help, they should be encouraged to see a doctor and be treated in a hospital for a period of time.

It is especially important to check the person's medicines. Often he will be on 3 or 4 types of pills-some for medical problems and others for the mental illness. Sometimes combining them causes the person to be even more sick.

### 2. HOMELESS PEOPLE

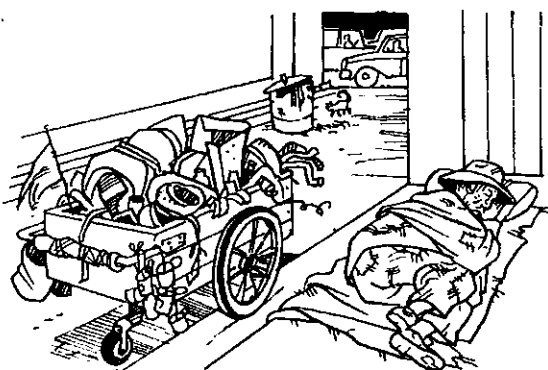
A person with a mental illness is sometimes not wanted by his family because of the strange behaviour and so lives on the street. Or the person just leaves his family and wanders around the community because the strange thoughts in his head tell him to, for example. He sleeps in any place he can find and keeps his belongings in a bag or a cart. He usually does not beg but finds food and clothing in other people's garbage.

## How to Help

If the "homeless" person is not hurting himself or a danger to others, the best help may be to leave him alone. If the community are worried about him, then he should be taken to a doctor.

Staying in hospital does not work well with most homeless people. They do not have any one to support or protect them. Without family support, the person will only return to the street when he leaves the hospital.

Sometimes regular visits to the local Health Centre will help. The staff should be told where the person can be usually found.



### LEARNING ACTIVITY The Cart Man

A shopkeeper is upset by the man who sleeps outside his back door. The man is called "cart man" because he pushes a cart full of junk and garbage that he collects that is not useful for anything. The homeless man talks to himself and often shouts curses at the people around him. He eats from the garbage areas and or the food he finds on the streets. No one knows where his family is or where he is from. He does not bother any one but people are afraid of him. The local business men on the main street are also getting upset. They think that they are losing money because people do not want to pass by the man when they enter the shops. The CBR worker heard about it from the man who owns the bread store and ask him to organize a meeting of the business men to try to solve the problem.

Role play the meeting with the businessmen. Some of the business men should be against helping the cart man. Others think he should go to hospital and some people think the hospital is no good. By the end of the role play the CBR worker and business men should have developed a plan to try to help the cart man.

### 3. "SLOW LEARNERS" AND MENTAL ILLNESS

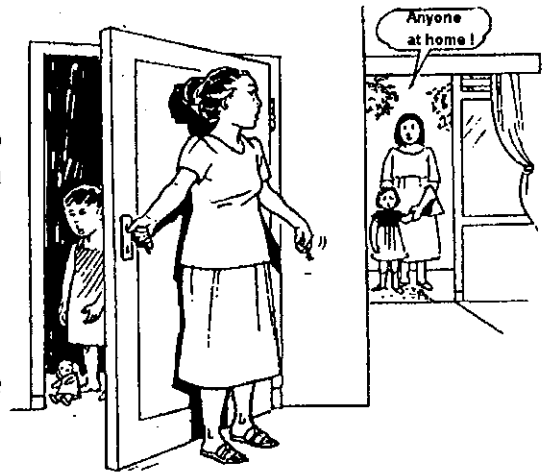
A person with a mental illness is sometimes hidden by their family. She never participates in family social events and does very few routine activities. Because the family ignore or hide her she does not learn how to do things for herself. Another problem is when the family does everything for the person with mental illness - feeds her, dresses her and so on. She may seem to be very stupid to the people around her. The person with a mental illness may have normal intelligence but because she has not been allowed to join the routine family activities and social events, she never learned what to do or say.

#### How to Help

The person with mental illness should be encouraged to do routine activities with help. Over time she will learn to be more independent if given the chance.

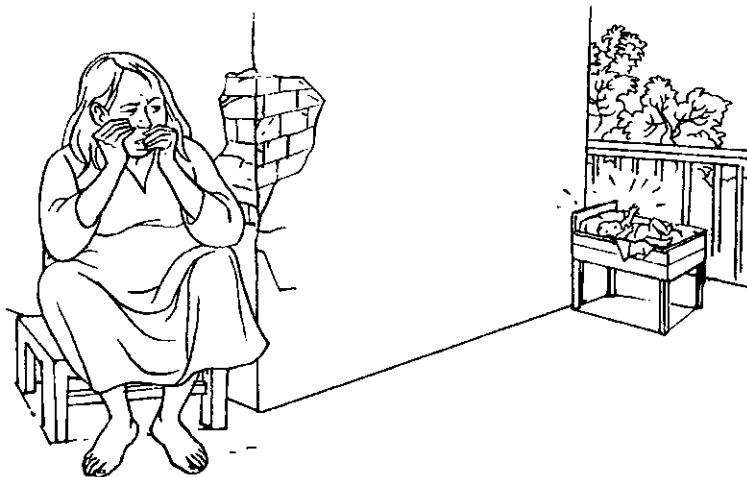
The person may need extra activities and stimulation, for example simple games, picture books and so on.

Mentally ill people should not be treated as if they are mentally handicapped.



### 4. DEPRESSION AFTER THE BIRTH OF A BABY


Some women become very sad and tearful after the birth of their baby. The woman may stay away from her husband and family and not feed the baby. She may stop eating and bathing and have strange behaviour. Her behaviour changes very quickly and she may also have strange thoughts that people are trying to hurt her or the baby. If left alone with out help, she may harm herself and the baby.



## How To Help

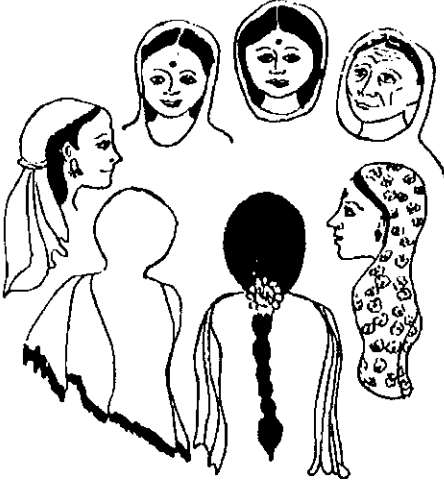
Any new mother who is acting this way should be taken immediately to the doctor with her baby.

When this is severe and the mother is harming herself or not caring for the baby, she may have to go to hospital. Another family member or friend may need to help care for the baby.



### LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### Educating Women About Signs of Mental Illness After Birth



One of the ways to help a woman when she is mentally ill after childbirth is to teach others to notice the signs of mental illness early. Because other women are the most likely to notice first, they should be given information about this kind of mental illness. There are many different groups of women in most communities. They can be used to help develop the community education activity while at the same time learning about this illness.

In groups of 4-6, design a poster, play or song that could be used to teach women with little or no education about mental illness after child birth. Make sure that the ideas are clear and the language is simple and easily understood. It should include the warning signs and how to help.

## 5. PEOPLE WHO WANT TO KILL THEMSELVES (SUICIDE)

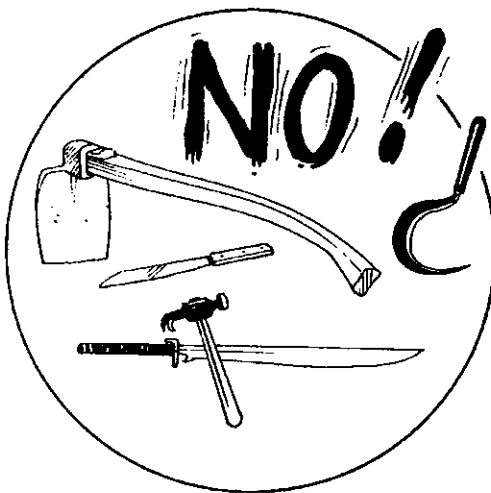
Some people with mental illness feel so sad that they do not want to keep on living. A person who has tried to kill herself should be taken to a doctor immediately (See Page 24). Usually people do not talk about it so it is difficult to know the warning signs before they try.

### What to do

If the person is still at home, someone should be with her all the time. Talk therapy can be used to remind her of all the useful things she has done and that she is not a bad person.

Try to get the person to do some routine activities, but do not leave her alone.

Only when she begins to say good things about herself is it safe for her to be left alone for short periods. Even then it is best that she always be in the other person's sight.



Sometimes a person will tell you about the plans to kill herself. This might help you to remove any dangerous tools or poisons. Some people can be convinced to make a promise not to kill themselves for a short period of time, 2 days for example, and during that time help can be found.