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# **What Really Helps: Practical Steps You Can Take to Assist Others**

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*Presenters:*

**Larry Fricks** and **Lisa Goodale, ACSW, LSW**



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## **Challenges we'll work on today ...**

### **Challenge #1:**

**Sometimes we don't know what to do, and so we do nothing. Or sometimes we do something we think will help – or what we think we “should” do – and it seems to make the situation worse.**

### **Solution:**

**Learn new and evidence-based techniques for reaching out to individuals experiencing challenges or crisis.**



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## **Challenges we'll work on today ...**

### **Challenge #2:**

**When people are diagnosed with a mental illness, the negative messages they give themselves about what that means can disable them the most.**

### **Solution:**

**Explore practical ways to help others catch, check, and change negative self-talk**



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# **Mental Health First Aid**

## **The Action Plan**

- ▶ **A** ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- ▶ **L** isten non-judgmentally
- ▶ **G** ive reassurance and information
- ▶ **E** ncourage appropriate professional help
- ▶ **E** ncourage self-help and other support strategies



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## **Assess for risk of suicide or harm**

### **How to help**

- **Approach the person in a caring and non-judgmental way to discuss your concerns**
- **Choose a private time or place, free from distractions**
- **Let the person know you are concerned and want to help – state the specific behaviors that concern you**
- **Be sensitive to the way the person is behaving**
- **Let the person set the pace and style of interaction**



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## **Assess for risk of suicide or harm**

**How to help, *continued***

- **Do not touch the person without permission**
- **Allow the person to talk about their experiences and beliefs if they want to, but do not force them**
- **Let the person know you are available to talk in the future**
- **Respect the person's privacy and confidentiality**



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## **Assess for risk of suicide or harm**

**When a person seems agitated, disruptive or aggressive**

- **Assist the person by remaining calm**
- **Talk in a clear, concise way**
- **Use short, simple sentences**
- **Speak quietly in a non-threatening tone at a moderate pace**
- **Answer questions calmly**
- **Comply with reasonable requests**
- **Maintain your safety and access to an exit**
- **Do not do anything to further agitate the person**



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## **Try to De-Escalate the Situation**

- ▶ **Speak slowly and confidently with a caring tone of voice**
- ▶ **Do not argue or challenge the person**
- ▶ **Do not threaten**
- ▶ **Do not raise your voice or talk too fast**
- ▶ **Use positive words instead of negative words**
- ▶ **Stay calm and avoid nervous behavior**
- ▶ **Do not restrict the person's movement**
- ▶ **Try to be aware of what things may make the person's fear and aggression worse**
- ▶ **Take a break from the conversation**



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## **Listen non-judgmentally**

**Try to**

- **Understand the symptoms for what they are**
- **Empathize with how the person is feeling about his/her beliefs and experiences**



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## **Listen non-judgmentally**

**Try not to**

- **Confront the person**
- **Criticize or blame**
- **Take delusional comments personally**
- **Use sarcasm**
- **Use patronizing statements**
- **State any judgments about the content of the beliefs and experiences**



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## **When communication is difficult**

- ▶ **Respond to disorganized speech by talking in an uncomplicated manner**
- ▶ **Repeat things if needed**
- ▶ **Be patient and allow plenty of time for responses**
- ▶ **Be aware that – just because the person may be showing a limited range of emotions – this does not mean they are not feeling anything**
- ▶ **Do not assume that the person cannot understand you, even if the response is limited**



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## **Give reassurance and information**

- ▶ **Treat the person with respect and dignity**
- ▶ **Offer consistent emotional support and understanding**
- ▶ **Give the person hope for recovery**
- ▶ **Provide practical help**
- ▶ **Offer information**
- ▶ **Do not make any promises you cannot keep**



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## **Encourage appropriate professional help**

**Professionals who can help:**

- **Doctors – Primary Care Physicians**
- **Psychiatrists and psychologists**
- **Social workers, counselors and other mental health clinicians**
- **Certified Peer Specialists**

**Types of professional help**

- **Therapy**
- **Medication**
- **Psychoeducation**
- **Other professional supports**



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## **Encourage self-help and other support strategies**

- ▶ **DBSA and other peer support groups**
- ▶ **Wellness centers and resources**
- ▶ **Family, friends, faith and other social networks**
- ▶ **Family support groups**
- ▶ **Discontinuation of alcohol and other drugs**



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## **What if the person doesn't want help?**

- ▶ **Encourage the person to talk with someone s/he trusts**
- ▶ **Never threaten the person with hospitalization**
- ▶ **Remain patient**
- ▶ **Remain friendly and open**
- ▶ **The person may want your help in the future**



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# **The disabling power of mental illness**

- ▶ **Symptoms**
- ▶ **Stigma**
- ▶ **Self-Image**



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## **Negative self-talk**

- ▶ **What is it?**
- ▶ **What role does it play in a person's life?**
- ▶ **What are helpful strategies that can be used to catch, check, and change it?**



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## **Combating negative self-talk**

**Five actions you have found helpful in catching,  
checking and changing negative self-talk**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



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## **Using what you've learned, to help others**

**How could you use these strategies to help someone who's being disabled by negative self-talk?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



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**Thank you for joining us today!**

For more information on DBSA training and  
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[Training@DBSAlliance.org](mailto:Training@DBSAlliance.org)

(800) 826-3632, x155



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**Rebecca's Dream<sup>SM</sup>**