

Managing Behavior Problems in people with Huntington Disease

Guidelines to Behavior Problem Solving

- ***When** does the problem occur?*
- ***Where** does it occur?*
- ***What** triggers the problem?*
- ***Who** is involved?*
- *What **follows** the behavior?*
- *What **emotion** (fear, anger, frustration) is involved?*

Communication

- *Be calm, gentle, reassuring*
- *Use humor*
- *Maintain good eye contact*
- *Keep your speech volume steady, low*
- *If frustrated, try later*
- *Never give up*

Listening skills

- *Listen actively; don't try to do two or more things at once*
- *Respond to the emotional tone of what's said*
- *Remember that the speaking voice is affected in HD*
- *Be generous with praise and encouragement*

Environment

- *Simplify*
- *Establish routines*

Communication Difficulties in HD

- ***How*** words are said; rhythm of speech
- ***Starting*** a conversation
- ***Organizing*** thoughts
- ***Understanding*** what is said

Clues to better communication

- *Allow enough time*
- *Offer cues, prompts*
- *Give choices*
- *Break things down into smaller steps*
- *Use “yes”, “no” format*
- *Speech therapy*
- *Use communication aids*

Memory impairment in HD

- *Difficulty learning new information*
- *Difficulty recalling learned information*

The Cognitive Disorder: Executive Function

- Organizing
- Prioritizing
- Controlling impulses
- Monitoring self-awareness
- Beginning and ending activities
- Creative thinking
- Problem-solving

Strategies for managing apathy

- *Understand that this is part of HD, not “laziness”*
- *Provide external structure*
- *Use calendars*
- *Maintain routines*

Strategies for helping disorganization

- *Use lists*
- *Use prompts for each step*
- *Rely on routines*

Coping with impulsivity

- *Remember, this is part of HD*
- *Don't always assume there is no trigger: be thoughtful*
- *Maintain routines*
- *Stay calm*
- *If impulsivity causes danger, consider mood stabilizing medications*

Managing frustration, irritability, anger outbursts

- *Restructure expectations and responsibilities*
- *Avoid confrontations and ultimatums*
- *Redirect the HD person*
- *Consider medications if necessary*

Denial and unawareness

- *Accept that this is part of HD*
- *Be creative!*
- *Consider counseling*

Managing repetition and perseveration

- *Use distraction*
- *Try to set limits*
- *Sometimes, meds help*

Managing depression

- *Seek medical assistance early*
- *Counseling and therapy help*
- *Medications help tremendously!*
- *Recognize the possibility of thoughts of suicide.*
 - *Take precautions to remove weapons, access to potentially toxic medications (including over-the-counter medications)*
 - *If the person has a plan or intent to harm him/herself, use emergency services: suicide help line, emergency room*

Managing anxiety

- *Use routines*
- *Simplify environment*
- *Avoid bringing up future stressful events too early*
- *Consider medications: benzodiazepines, mood stabilizers*

Managing Psychosis

- Consult the physician
- Antipsychotic medications will help

Sleep disturbances

- Good sleep hygiene:
 - Regular schedule
 - Avoid long naps
 - No heavy meals before bedtime
 - Exercise regularly early in the day
 - Avoid caffeine
 - Warm shower before bedtime
 - Consider medications