

# How to communicate calmly with someone in distress

These tips are for professionals, family members and friends who are supporting someone who is distressed or agitated.

It can be used in line with any behavioural guidelines that are in place for a person. If you don't feel able to cope, take a step back and ask someone else to help.

**1** Listen to what the person is saying and try to help if you can

**2** Consider if the person has additional needs (such as pain or cognitive problems) that might not be visible

**3** Consider stepping back and giving them space if they are agitated

**4** Model calm behaviour through your voice and body language

**5** To help them feel understood, acknowledge the emotion they are feeling: "I can see that you are upset at the moment"

**6** Try to find things that you can agree with them about e.g. "I agree that it is difficult/stressful/confusing"

**7** Try to avoid disagreement, even if you believe you are right

**8** Gradually shift the topic away from the problem or use distraction

Afterwards, try to make time to talk to staff members to help you reflect on what happened and why. This can help your well-being and allow you to see what went well or how similar situations could be managed differently in the future.

**Please ask for support from the neuropsychology team if required.**