

HOW TO / HOW NOT TO DEAL?

Some advice on How (and How Not) to deal with the mentally ill. The following are ten commandments for those with mentally ill relatives and friends:

1. Do not advise him or her to use will-power. which is dangerous. arrogant and ignorant to say.
2. Do not offer such fatuous remedies as get a hobby or keep your chin up or count your blessings.
3. Do not ask him to pull himself together.
4. Do not suggest a change in scenery for the mental patient takes his scenery with him wherever he goes.
5. Do not say If you really loved me.
6. Do not urge "If only you would try a little harder," for this is like imploring a hunch-back to "straighten up a little."
7. Do not imagine for a moment that a new job, mate, or setting will clear up the ailment, for the problems come from within the patient, not without.

8. Do not invoke faith or any religious inspiration. because religious feeling must be rooted in mental health, not illness.
9. Do not preach, beg, give pep talks, threaten, bribe, or do any thing that assumes the patient could change if only he would.
10. In a positive sense, be sympathetic, but not sentimental, cool, but not hard, concerned, but not frightened, and most of all, keep in mind, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

None of these things are easy, some impossibly hard; but at the very least, well persons should respect the illness. They would not expect the patient to walk with the equivalent of two broken legs. They cannot make the patient better: but they should make him feel better.

-Written by Sidney J. Harris, Chicago Daily News.

