Helping at the bedside

What you know can help staff understand what the person is usually like. If you can visit, being there may help them feel safer. Ask staff what is safe for this person.

If you are there

Sit where they can see you. Say who you are. If they welcome touch, hold their hand. Short, calm visits may be easier than a long or busy visit.

Talk simply

Use short sentences and give them time to reply. Mention the day, place and what happens next as part of the conversation: "It is Tuesday morning. You are in hospital. Lunch is coming soon." Do not test their memory with repeated questions.

If they believe something that is not true

Do not argue and do not agree with a frightening belief. Respond to how they feel: "That sounds frightening. I am here with you." Explain what is happening now in simple words, then talk about something familiar.

Make the bedside easier to understand

- Glasses on and clean; hearing aids in and working; dentures in when safe
- A clock or calendar where they can see it
- A few familiar things, such as photographs, a blanket or music played quietly

Drinks, meals and moving

- Ask staff what the person may safely eat and drink, and whether you can help them move.
- Do not give food or drink if the person is too drowsy to swallow safely.
- Follow any advice about swallowing, limits on how much they should drink, or falls.
- Tell staff if the person drinks less than usual, has a dry mouth or pain, has difficulty passing stools or urine, or becomes unusually sleepy.

When you are not there

Ask how to contact the person or care team, who will give updates and what staff need from you. Take breaks and share visits if you can.

Get help for a sudden change

Tell staff immediately about any sudden worsening or if the person responds much less than usual. If sudden confusion begins at home or elsewhere outside a care setting, phone the local emergency number now.

Read more: https://deliriumsupport.com/how-you-can-help/

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