



Signs of anxiety – Training Bite 1

Scenario: David is a 78 year old male with limited mobility. David has always been active and engaged in his residence and staff have always stated they enjoy working with him. Recently David had a fall. Physically he has recovered well, however his moods have changed. David has become angry with staff when they are assisting him with personal care and mobility. David has also had difficulty in making decisions recently, even routine tasks such as deciding what to wear, what to eat and what activity to participate in. This week he has also refused to go to the men's shed, which he usually never misses.

What could be going on for David?

How can we approach David about this?

Lead staff in a discussion about the changes in moods and behaviour and possible causes.

Some answers that could come up are: UTI, Dementia, Pain, Family issues, Anxiety

Hints

What are the signs of anxiety problems?

The worry and fear that comes with anxiety problems may cause people to avoid situations, things or people, even when they know that what they are feeling doesn't make sense. Anxiety may also cause them to feel physically ill. Signs that an older adult may have an anxiety problem include:

- irrational and excessive worry or fear
- checking and rechecking for safety
- avoiding routine activities
- avoiding social situations
- racing heart
- shallow breathing, trembling, nausea, sweating.

- While the state of anxiety—an experience of tension and apprehension—is an ordinary response to a threat or danger, excessive anxiety that causes distress or interferes with daily life is not a normal part of the aging process
- Be patient and compassionate as you talk openly with them about what is going on and why you are worried about them. Provide examples if you can.
- Value their experience and wisdom. Most older people have lived through times of significant stress, grief or perhaps war. This experience will have helped to shape their thinking, style of coping and ability to solve problems. Call on their wisdom when searching for solutions as they may have ideas that you have not yet considered.
- Engaging people suffering from anxiety in social, creative, or other activities they find interesting can be very helpful
- The older person may or may not be ready to get help but encourage them to talk openly with you, or other family members, about how they feel and what they might find helpful from others.

Tips for trainers:

Any contributions from participants are helpful, people learn from hearing good and not so good advice, accept all contributions.

Reflect any good piece of information back positively and highlight it.

You don't need all the answers, you do need them to start thinking about how they interact.