INTERVENING WITH PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

- Avoid rapid actions
- Slow down
- Remain calm
- Introduce yourself
- Move dangerous objects out of reach/view of the person
- Separate persons who are in conflict
- Do not violate personal space
- Divert from anxiety by asking for routine information
- Listen and use empathic responses, e.g., “What I’m hearing you say”, “It seems like…”
- Recognize and respond to physical needs
- Paraphrase responses to check for understanding
- Summarize
- Develop rapport by finding something to agree on
- Ask the person what he/she would like to be called
- Ask simple and direct questions
- Ask open-ended questions
- Identify and communicate with the “healthy” aspects of the person
- Be honest
- Use calm, simple, direct instructions
- Restate the person’s statements
- Use simple acknowledgements
- Give broad openings
- Seek clarification
- Use position of authority in a positive manner
- Stress positiveness such as person’s strengths, qualities, resources
- Remain as neutral and objective as possible
- Demonstrate respect, openness, acceptance, and a positive attitude
- Appeal to emotions

**Remember that a person with mental illness who is experiencing a crisis may seem unusually strong and/or unaffected by pain due to:
- The influx of adrenaline into his/her system
- A higher pain threshold

Actions to Avoid:
- Do not challenge delusions
- Do not allow yourself to be manipulated
- Do not overreact to offensive language
- Do not overreact to sexual, racial, or ethnic slurs directed at you
- Do not order, command, warn, or threaten
- Do not moralize, preach, judge
- Do not name call, ridicule
- Do not whisper, laugh, giggle
- Do not negate the seriousness of the person’s concerns