

## Coping with Difficult Behaviour: Do's and Don'ts<sup>1</sup>

### *Aggressive behaviour*

- ✿ People with schizophrenia are usually shy and withdrawn. Aggression is no more common among these people than in the general community.
- ✿ However, if you are living with someone who does tend to be aggressive you need to know what to do so that you don't live in constant fear.

#### **DO**

- ✿ Give a quiet but firm command such as "stop please".
- ✿ If they don't stop, leave the room or the house quickly.
- ✿ Leave them alone until they calm down (if you have left the house, a phone call may tell you if they are calmer).
- ✿ Call your relative's therapist. If she/he is not available, your local hospital or community health centre will inform you about whom to contact.
- ✿ Take any threats or warnings seriously, contact the therapist if your relative has ideas of being persecuted and talks about "getting them before they get me", etc.

#### **DON'T**

- ✿ Don't say angry or critical things that will provoke more aggression.
- ✿ Don't argue.
- ✿ Don't stay around if they don't calm down.
- ✿ Don't ignore verbal threats or warnings of violence made to you or others.
- ✿ Don't think that you have to tolerate aggression or violence to you or your family.
- ✿ Don't try to battle it out on your own – ask for help.

<sup>1</sup>Schizophrenia: A Self-Help Guide for Relatives and Carers by Olga Piatkowska and Maria Visotina (1989)