

Coping with Difficult Behaviour: Do's and Don'ts¹

Sleeping or withdrawing a lot of the time or sleeping at odd times

If this is happening in the first 6-12 months after a “breakdown” or relapse:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Leave them alone, but make contact whenever they come out, to let them know you are there if they need you. ✿ Remember they need to do this. ✿ Gently encourage other activities that are not too demanding (e.g. watching TV, washing dishes). ✿ Go out and enjoy yourself with other people. ✿ Occasionally offer a cup of tea or coffee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Don't take it personally or blame yourself. ✿ Don't wear yourself out trying to change them. ✿ Don't worry or fuss too much over them. ✿ Don't invite a lot of visitors home – it might be overwhelming. ✿ Don't force them to talk to people.

After 6-12 months

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Slowly ask them to get up earlier in the day and to do more things. ✿ Offer some things to enjoy when they get up like a tempting breakfast, pleasant music etc. ✿ If they begin to withdraw or have trouble sleeping after being well for some time, contact the therapist – they may be having a relapse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Don't think that you always have to be protective. Don't wear yourself out trying to do everything for your relative.

These are suggestions to try, but if they don't work for you, make sure you consult with the mental health professional that you see about what to do next. Don't assume that nothing can be done.

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