

Appendix 13 Management plan for Adjustment Disorder

Management strategies will always vary from one individual to the next depending on the individual's particular problems. However, the management of adjustment disorder generally involves:

1. Education
 - a. Individuals with adjustment disorder can be reassured that stress and life events often have mental and physical effects.
 - If symptoms of anxiety are prominent, an explanation of the fight-or-flight response is required
 - If depressive symptoms are prominent the individual could be reassured that a low or sad mood is common during or following the experience of significant life problems or loss
 - Likewise, if somatic symptoms are prominent, the link between stress and physical problems could be explained. For example, "When individuals get stressed they can experience prolonged muscle tension (this is part of the fight-or-flight response). This muscle tension can directly cause headaches (or backaches/ bowel disturbances etc.)."
 - b. Stress related symptoms will usually only last a few days or weeks and will resolve without any specific intervention.
2. Coping with stress-related symptoms
 - Acknowledge the significance of the stressful event/s
 - Reinforce any positive steps the individual has taken to deal with the stressful event/s
 - If the stress is unresolved, help the individual modify the situation with structured problem solving (see Appendix 7)
 - Short term rest and relief from stress may be helpful
 - Encourage a return to usual activities within a few weeks
 - Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol to relieve stress
 - Consider consultation if significant symptoms last more than one month despite carrying out the interventions suggested here. (Treatment Protocol Project 1997)