

Social Cognition Problems

Persons with psychosis often have problems with social communications. There may be troubles reading emotions in others, understanding social "cues", getting jokes, being able to accurately guess what others are thinking and many other socially related skills.

Even considering those listed above can give clinicians some insight into areas of fruitful work with clients. For example, a problem being able to consider what others might be thinking might have implications for dressing and hygiene or public appearance. An inability to read emotions in the faces or gestures of others can lead to feelings of rejection, confusion or anger and might contribute to social isolation or the development of aggression.

- trouble reading social cues (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice)
- misinterpreting what people say
- being easily manipulated by others
- difficulty telling the difference between playful and mean-spirited teasing
- difficulty guessing what other people may be thinking
- trouble figuring out when people are joking
- jumping to conclusions about what caused a situation especially attributing to other people rather than the situation
- difficulty figuring out what other people will do or how they might react

- trouble explaining things in a way that other people can understand

Coping Strategies

Getting Clarification

- 1) Encourage clients to ask others "what do you mean by that...?"
- 2) A second tactic is to encourage the use of reflective statements (That old Rogerian training just keeps being useful!). Have clients put into their own words what they believe the other person is saying. This could be prefaced by a statement like "... so what you are saying is that...".
- 3) Getting feedback through other people. A client could ask a friend or other person they trust to give an opinion about how they might view the situation that the client is unsure about. Trusted others might also be helpful in suggesting ways to deal with a situation where potential misunderstanding occurs.

Tracking Problem Situations

Clients might track social situations where they experience problems or misunderstandings. Perhaps some of the time the problem is with a person or a situation but there might also be trends that suggest a person consistently misinterprets certain situations or behaviours. If this is found, then it may help to plan how to deal with these before they arise again.

Give the Other the Benefit of the Doubt

This may be difficult to do but can lead to reduced anxiety and fewer adverse consequences. See if a client can accept the position that most people do not intend to physically or mentally harm others. Thus, try to teach clients not to over-react to situations they experience for the first time. If a social problem occurs over and over,

then it should be analysed to determine what elements are contributing to the problem and how these elements could be addressed.

Pretend or Role Play

Work through a social situation and see if you and the client can imagine what a third person might be thinking in that situation. Even harder is to imagine what the third person might think you are thinking!

Go over the sequence of a social encounter and imagine what would normally go next.