

# First Responder Accreditation

Topic 12: Psychological First Aid



The following case studies have been put together to support your learning in Psychological First Aid. These case studies are not part of your formal assessment.

## CASE STUDY ONE

You are on duty at a community arts and crafts fair. A visitor to the fair, Sharon, approaches you with her elderly mother who, in a very distressed manner, is screaming loudly about poisonous plants and appears to be talking to these plants (although you can't see anything). Sharon explains that her mother, normally a mild and calm person, has over the course of the past few hours become agitated, non-sensical and paranoid. What should the team do?

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## CASE STUDY TWO

The first aid team have been on duty all day and are packing up the first aid post. A woman arrives at the tent asking for someone's help. She says "I need help. I think I'm going to die". The woman is about 25, you notice that she is hyperventilating, shaking and obviously very panicked. What should the team do?

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## MODEL ANSWER – CASE STUDY ONE

1. DRABCD
2. Call an ambulance (for ALL psychotic patients)
3. Attempt to examine the patient for any injury or illness that she has failed to report whilst pre-occupied with her delusions and hallucinations
4. Record as detailed history as possible, including from Sharon.
5. Support the patient to establish a calm environment
  - a. Do not invade her personal space without permission
  - b. Be patient – it will take the patient a while to process information
  - c. Ask questions such as, *“are you hearing voices other than mine/seeing people other than me?”*
  - d. Explain, *“I can’t see those poisonous plants but I believe that you do. I want you to try and concentrate on my voice.”*

## MODEL ANSWER – CASE STUDY TWO

1. DRABCD
2. Introduce yourself with your name and title
3. Rule out cardiac emergency
4. Establish if there is a reason for the patient’s distress.
  - a. Ask the patient if something has happened to make them feel this way.
5. Normalise the situation:
  - a. *“What you are experiencing is a panic attack. It is a common condition and it is not unusual for people to experience it.”*
6. Explain what is happening:
  - a. *“What is happening at the moment is that your body is going through an abnormally intense fight/flight reflex. Your blood pressure is going up and you probably feel shaky and nervous. These symptoms are only likely to last a few minutes. All you need to do is breathe deeply and ride them out.”*
7. Foster feelings of safety:
  - a. *“I don’t want you to worry. These symptoms will fade, you are in the first aid tent now, you are in safe hands, this is going to be okay.”*
8. Support breathing by asking the patient to match the first aider breath for breath, with slow, deep inhalations.
9. Apply cool towel to patient’s forehead or neck
10. Advise the patient that no further treatment is likely to be required, but to see GP if concerned.