

## *Helping a Young Person with False or Unusual Beliefs*

**Listen.** You may reassure him that feared beliefs are not real, but **do not argue.** Attend to his *feelings* about the beliefs. Help him manage these.

### **Consider:**

- Whether or not your child can question whether his beliefs might not be real.
- Whether or not the beliefs are positive (empowering, simplifying) or distressing (confusing, overwhelming, scary).
- Whether or not your child wants to talk about his thoughts and beliefs.
- Delusions, like other symptoms, typically become stronger or more rigid under stress.
- Substance use/abuse can stimulate or increase unusual thinking.
- Medications may help and may need to be increased during times of stress.
- Each person's experience is unique. Find what is helpful to your child.

### **Strategies:**

- See if the belief can **motivate some positive step**: doing school work to prove a teacher wrong who is believed to be out to fail her; learning to cook if afraid of being poisoned.
- See if it helps to **engage in an activity**, a game or project, to exercise or listen to music.
- How about **doing something social** with friends or family? A game, a movie, or talking.
- **Explore the child's own questions or doubts.** Help him think up ways to test the belief.
- Establish and maintain **predictable, low stress routines** with reduced expectations.
- Consider an environmental change to **address an underlying fear** or reduces stress. Provide more support at school, social skill practice, realistic feedback, examples.
- Teach her to **self-talk**: "I'll be alright" or "I'm afraid but I can handle it"
- Make a **list of all different imaginable choices for dealing with the belief.** Weigh the pros and cons of each and then pick one or two options to try within a set timeframe.
- **Accept.** Help her carry on with important goals without trying to change her beliefs.
- **Spend time with pets or in nature.** These may be grounding and non-threatening.
- **Encourage him to pray.** Ask for help from a higher power.
- **Help** her consider asking others what they think about the fear or belief.
- **See if it helps to relax**, take deep breaths, find quiet. Have him try closing her eyes.
- **Be patient.** Delusions may fade slowly over time or not at all.

**RESOURCES:** See website for suggestions of books and other resources.