

## Handy Tips

- Be sure to recognize the importance of a person confiding in you after months or years of struggle, disconnection, poor services, and feelings of hopelessness. Appreciate that even small steps can be very significant.
- A diagnosis does not define a person. Each person is unique, complex and sometimes unpredictable, surpassing all of our expectations.
- Curiosity, respect, and genuine interest are important qualities to bring to interviewing and assessment.
- Regardless of level of experience, learning to make a comprehensive and effective assessment is an ongoing process.
- Although it is not possible to “wear another’s words,” techniques can be borrowed and adapted to fit one’s own style.
- Strive to be the best possible “clinical detective.” Fit the pieces together to create the whole story of the person’s life.
- In helping people to change, the focus is on their strengths. However, gathering information for disability determination requires focusing on people’s struggles as well as their strengths.
- It is important to understand the whole person over his or her entire history – from early life experiences to the present. Learn the nuances of how life experiences impact the person’s current situation and functioning.
- Avoid blaming a person or labeling him or her “resistant.” When a person is unable to provide information, take a different approach. Try to understand the basis of a person’s reluctance. Be creative and respectful to reduce resistance.
- Assessment is a process whereby each new piece of information triggers more questions. Do not settle for incomplete information. Strive to understand the whole person.
- If a case manager is uncomfortable or feels ill-equipped to ask about certain issues, he or she should seek assistance from someone with more clinical experience. People are aware when an interviewer is uncomfortable or insincere. Avoid miscommunication by getting help.
- As information is gathered, continue to provide new information to DDS. Ongoing information can be provided until a decision is made. Communication is key.