

Responding to Acute FND Episodes

Acute episodes of Functional Neurological Disorder can be unsettling for the person experiencing them and for those nearby. Clear, calm response helps reduce risk, unnecessary escalation, and additional distress.

This toolkit focuses on **practical response during acute FND episodes**, with an emphasis on safety, clarity, and appropriate support. It does not provide medical advice or emergency instruction.

Prioritizing Immediate Safety

During an acute episode, the first priority is physical safety.

This may involve:

- ensuring the person is in a stable, safe position
- moving hazards out of the immediate area
- supporting balance or positioning if needed

Safety support focuses on preventing injury, not stopping symptoms.

Maintaining a Calm Environment

A calm environment can help prevent additional strain during an episode.

It may help to:

- reduce noise, light, or crowding
- limit the number of people responding
- avoid sudden movements or urgency

Lower stimulation supports steadier response.

Communicating Clearly and Simply

During acute episodes, communication capacity may be reduced.

Helpful approaches include:

- speaking slowly and clearly
- using simple, direct language
- avoiding rapid questions or complex instructions

Clear communication supports understanding when capacity is limited.

Allowing Time for Symptoms to Settle

Some acute FND episodes resolve with time and support.

It may be appropriate to:

- allow pauses without pressure
- avoid repeated prompting or testing
- give space while remaining available

Time is often part of resolution.

Avoiding Unnecessary Escalation

Escalation can increase distress and confusion.

When possible:

- avoid assuming medical emergency by default
- avoid repeated interventions if safety is stable
- avoid attributing cause or intent during the episode

Measured response helps preserve dignity.

Knowing When Additional Help Is Needed

There are situations where additional support is appropriate.

This may include:

- inability to maintain safety
- injury or risk of injury

- symptoms that are unusual for the individual
- concerns that extend beyond typical FND presentation

Seeking help is a safety decision, not a failure.

After the Episode

Recovery may take time after an acute episode.

Afterward, it may help to:

- allow rest and reduced demand
- avoid immediate explanation or analysis
- note what was helpful for future reference

Post-episode care supports stability.

Supporting Safe and Respectful Response

Responding to acute FND episodes involves calm presence, attention to safety, and flexibility. When responses are measured and respectful, they help reduce harm and support recovery.

This toolkit is intended to support appropriate response during acute episodes while respecting individual needs and limits.

