Helping a Love One Who Has Delirium

What is delirium? Delirium is a state of severe confusion.

**People with delirium:**
- Cannot think clearly
- Have trouble paying attention
- Have a hard time understanding what is going on around them
- May see or hear things that are not there
- May be agitated or withdrawn

What causes delirium? Experts think delirium is caused by a change in the way the brain is working.

**This can be caused by:**
- Lack of oxygen in the brain
- Inability to use oxygen in the brain
- Chemical changes in the brain
- Certain medicines and drugs, including alcohol, sedatives, and pain medicine
- Infections or other illnesses
- Withdrawal from alcohol or nicotine
- Severe pain

Delirium is very common in an intensive care unit (ICU). In fact, 2 out of 3 ICU patients have delirium.

What can I do to help my loved one? Here are some things you can do while your loved one is in the hospital:

- **BRING** their glasses and/or hearing aids
- **TALK** with them about family and friends
- **REMINd** them where they are what day it is
- **TURN ON** the lights during the day and off at night
- **SILENCE** the room as much as possible at night

For more information: ICUDelirium.org/Patients-and-Families/Overview