

Compassionate Communication

This practice has been endorsed by the National Patients' Association of Canada & the Alberta Health Services Patient & Family Advisory Group

When we show empathy and respect for our patients their overall experience improves. This can result in better health outcomes, improved patient safety and increased job satisfaction for caregivers.

Use these questions to help cultivate mutual respect and show empathy!



The Patient's Explanation

1. "What do you CALL the problem?"
2. "What do you think caused the problem?"
3. "Why do you think it started when it did?"
4. "What *makes* this a problem for you?"
5. "How severe is the problem?"
6. "What do you hope treatment will achieve?"
7. "What do you fear most about the problem or its treatment?"



Conveying Empathy

1. **Reflect:**
"I can see you are feeling..."
2. **Legitimize:**
"I can understand why you might feel that because..."
3. **Support:**
"I want to help..."
4. **Partner:**
"Let's work together..."
5. **Encouragement:**
"You're doing great!"
6. **Presence:**
Think to yourself: breathe, relax your muscles, focus on the moment.



Knowing the Patient

1. "What should I know about you to help me take the best care of you that I can?"
2. "What are the things you are most concerned about?"
3. "Who else, or what else, will be affected by what's happening to your health?"
4. "Who should be here to help support you?" (friends, family, religious or support network)



This Practical Wisdom Adapted From:

Chochinov, H. (2007). Dignity and the essence of medicine: The A, B, C, and D of dignity conserving care. *British Medical Journal*, 335, 184-187.
Cohen-Cole, S., & Bird, J. (1991). Building rapport and responding to patient's emotions. In Cohen-Cole, S. (Ed.), *The medical interview: The three function approach*, (pp. 21-27). St. Louis, MO: Mosby Year Book.



Powerful Questions for Improving Empathy

As caregivers, we are constantly tending to the needs of others. But the costs of this can be high, and signs of our own fatigue and discouragement can creep up on us. This can begin to impact our work because the truth is...we can't REALLY take better care of others than we do ourselves – at least not for long.

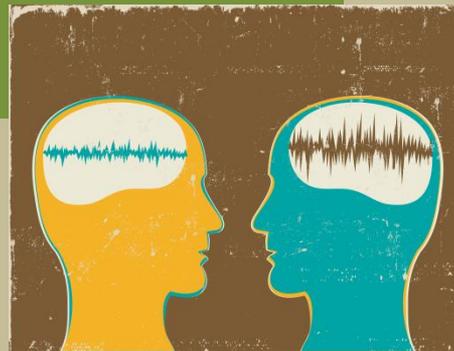
Self Awareness and Self Care

Compassion for Others:

1. How would I be feeling in this patient or family member's shoes?
2. Am I aware of how my own feelings, voice tone or actions may be affecting the patient?
3. Have I checked whether my assumptions are accurate?
4. Could my reaction to this client or family be based on something to do with my own experiences, anxieties or fears?

Compassion for Myself:

1. What do I need right now?
2. Do I need a break? The washroom? Food?
3. Am I anxious? What would make me feel more safe?
4. Am I sad? Where can I find comfort?
5. Am I angry? How can I calm down and get organized?
6. Do I need support? Who can I ask for help?
7. Am I having any fun?
8. Is my life outside of work fulfilling? What do I need more or less of? How can I make this happen?



This Practical Wisdom Adapted From:

Frankel, R., & Stein, T. (1999). Getting the most out of the clinical encounter: The four habits model. *The Permanente Journal*, 3(3), 79-88.

Frankel, R., Stein, T., & Krupat, E. (2003). *The four habits approach to effective clinical communication*. The Permanente Medical Group Inc.

Kleinman, A., Eisenberg, L., & Good, B. (2006). Culture, illness, and care: Clinical lessons from anthropologic and cross-cultural research. *The Journal of Lifelong Learning in Psychiatry*, 4(1), 140-149.