Strategies for Positive Patient Encounters

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STOP doing

LOOK inward

LISTEN patiently

BE aware
Remember, we can’t control how people act towards us but we can control how we respond.
Escalation

Frustration with medical systems and procedures
Traumatic or adverse prior experiences
Stress (chronic or acute)
Fear and worry
Individual mental health and substance abuse issues

Long wait times
Crowding
Administrative barriers

Stress (chronic or acute)
Training deficits
Traumatic or adverse experiences
Communication style
Conflict resolution style
Fear and worry
Individual mental health and substance abuse issues
KEEP CALM
DO NOT
REACT,
RESPOND
De-escalation Skills

- Active Skills
  - Listening without judgement
  - Assertive communication
  - Tone of voice
  - Reflecting and summarizing
  - Empathizing
  - Problem solving
  - Boundary setting
  - Coordinating with other staff and supervisors
De-escalation Skills

• Passive Skills
  • Provide space for the patient to share their concern
  • Body language
    • Posture
    • Undivided attention
    • Eye contract and eye level
    • Nodding and other acknowledgements
Escalation Cycle in Healthcare

Patient Factors
Stress, mental health issues, substance use, frustration, etc.

Triggering Event and Context
Long wait times, documentation issues, missed appointments, treatment barriers.

Escalation
Raising voice, agitation, escalated body language, accusations.

Staff Factors
Stress, emotional triggers, communication style, burn out, etc.

Mutual Escalation
Non productive dialogue, potential incidents, work stress.
Steps of De-escalating Others

Step 1: Validate

• Avoid rushing to judgement. Take your time to gather all of the information.

• Communicate your understanding of their emotional experience. Let them know you “get it”.

Step 2: Support

• Try to meet emotional and practical needs
What are some example of what you should say?

Please put it in the Zoom chat.
“I am sorry you are upset. Do you mind sharing what is making you feel this way?”

“I can understand why you might feel/think/want ________ (emotion or need),…”

Pause!

Which 3-letter word are you tempted to use?
But
Avoid using “but”. Instead use “because”

“I can understand you are frustrated by the long wait, but…”

Is transformed into:

“I can understand you are frustrated by the long wait because you have been here all morning and you are in pain.”
Avoid statements like “calm down” or “relax”

“Calm down first and I will see what I can do”

*Is transformed into*

“I can see how frustrating this situation is for you, let me help you”

Or

“I understand you are frustrated about _______ and I will do my best to assist you”
Thank You!
De-escalating Others Starts with De-escalating Yourself

• What are your common daily stressors?

• What are your long term emotional triggers?

• How do you respond when emotionally flooded?
  • Fight, flight, freeze?

• What beliefs do you hold about the clients?
The Platinum Rule:
“Treat others the way they would like to be treated.”
Self De-escalation Skills

If confronted with a hostile situation, a coworker or patient take the following steps:

• Take a deep breath
• Take another deep breath
• Think before speaking
• Stay in the moment
• Maintain your perspective
Self De-escalation Skills

- Utilize positive self-talk
- Take a break from interaction and debrief with manager
- Learn that you are not your emotions
- Learn from the interaction and grow
- Practice daily gratitude
- Make stress management a part of your daily life
Taking Care of Yourself When Caring for Others

- Pay attention to your emotional world
- Breath
- Be mindful and stay in the present moment
- Exercise
- Eat foods with high nutritional value
- Sleep 7-9 hours per night

- Ask for help when you need it
- Prayer, yoga, and meditation
- Building time and stress management skills
- Nurture creativity and play
- Practice gratitude
Remember…

Every encounter may not be what you wanted it to be or what you expected it to be.

We can make even challenging situations better.

Your caring about them matters!
Resources

- **Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High**
- **Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior**
- **Stress Free for Good: 10 Scientifically Proven Life Skills for Health and Happiness**
- **Department of Mental Health Helpline**  
  (800) 854-7771
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
  (800) 273-8255
- **Substance Abuse Service Helpline**  
  (844) 804-7500
- **ACEs Aware:**  
  [https://www.acesaware.org/](https://www.acesaware.org/)
Thank you for attending!
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Questions?

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