

Heartfelt Communications: *Can We Make People Happy?*



Scott Louis Diering, MD, MA

Love Your Patients!, Inc.

How can we show our patients that we care?

We behave with love...provider love.

Agape is the best word to describe this provider love.

“Unconditional love of all humanity.”

Agape

- *Be the person you would want to have take care of you.*

♥ Compassion

♥ Respect

♥ Humility

Compassion

Compassion is love from our heart.

What actions demonstrate compassion?

- Empathize
- Minister
- Attend

Judkins, SK and Eldridge, C (2001) Let's put caring back into healthcare. Teaching staff to care. JONA 31: 509-511.

Empathize

Read your patient

Feel their pain

Face Facts

Empathize

Read your patient: Look, listen...then feel.

Look at your patient carefully.

Hear and see the clues they give you.

They will let you know what is important.

Empathize

Feel their pain

Respond to their suffering, confusion, and anxiety.

Show that you share their hurt and worry by *nodding your head* and *gesticulating* a lot.

Make sure your vocal tones, actions and words are congruent!

Empathize

Face facts



Use your facial expressions to show you share their feelings.

When in doubt, *mirror* their facial expressions.

Please, do not be a robot.



Minister

Be supportive and comforting

Get a little closer

Speaking personally

Minister

Be supportive and comforting to your patient.

Address their fears and anxieties.

Reassurances are good, but *nothing* can be trivial.

Be helpful.

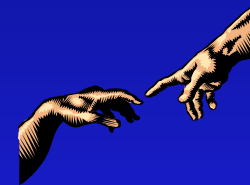
Minister

Get a little closer

Fredriksson, L. (1999). Modes of relating in a caring conversation: a research synthesis on presence, touch and listening. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 30: 1167-1176.

Gentle physical contact says more than words can say.

Your touch is very comforting.



Touching distinguishes healthcare from everything else.

Minister

Speaking personally

Invest a little bit of yourself in your patient.

Say, “*I would like...*” or “*I would feel better if...*” when you make requests or give advice.

Saying “*We...*” is a powerful way to show your patient that they are not alone.

Attend

Listen actively

The eyes have it

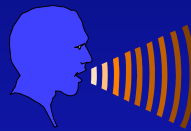
Excuses, excuses

Attend

Listen actively

Lang, F. et al. (2000). Clues to patients' explanations and concerns about their illnesses. A call for active listening. Archives of Family Medicine. 9, pp. 222-227.

Let them speak!



Repeat or paraphrase: “Seek first to understand.”

Listen to their story.



Attend



The eyes have it

Sherer, M., and RW Rogers. (1980). Effect of therapist's nonverbal communication on rated skill and effectiveness. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 36: 696-700.



Eye contact shows sincere interest.

Offer eye contact when you introduce yourself.

Maintain gentle eye contact during your interaction.



Attend

Excuses, excuses

Excuse yourself whenever your attention is diverted.

Please say, “Excuse me,” when you interrupt another person.

Remember to excuse yourself whenever you leave their side.

Respect

Respect is love from our spirit.

How do we demonstrate Respect?

- Show courtesy
- Validate
- Be honest

Show Courtesy

Always be polite

Dignify your patients

Host vs. staffed



Show Courtesy

Always be polite

Greet people warmly, and introduce yourself frequently.

Say, “Please,” “Thank you,” and “May I,” etc.

Everyone is Mr. or Mrs., sir or ma’am.

Show Courtesy

Dignify your patient

Are you caring for a person, or an illness?

Keep privates private.

Just between you and I, avoid discussing patients.

Show Courtesy

Host vs. Staffed

Think of yourself as a hostess or host, and treat patients as if they are guests in your home.

Ask permission.

Dress nicely and neatly.

Validate

Face-saving measures

Do you acknowledge?

Praise any accomplishments

Validate

Face-saving measures

Never allow someone to appear foolish.

Praise your patient's *intentions*.

Correct, admonish and teach *softly*.

Validate

Do you acknowledge?

Acknowledge your patients efforts.

Affirm, even if you do not agree.

Validate

Praise any accomplishments

Let your patients know that you see them as special.

Recognize their unique qualities.

Remember, everyone can do *something* better than you.

Be Honest and Genuine

Keep your patient informed

Relinquish control

Admit mistakes

Be Honest and Genuine

Keep your patient informed

Never forget to explain wait times, delays and deviations.

However, it helps to always *overestimate* wait times.



“I do not know, but I will try to find out...” is a perfectly acceptable answer.

Be Honest and Genuine

Relinquish control

Weston, WW (2001). Informed and shared decision making: The crux of patient-centred care. CMAJ, 165 (4): 438-439.

Remind your patients of their own responsibilities.

Let them know your limitations.

Encourage follow-up!

Be Honest and Genuine

Admit mistakes

Accept blame.

Apologize.

Ask how it impacts your patient.

Humility

Humility is love from our intellect.

How can we be certain we are acting with humility?

- Translate
- Admire
- Be gracious

Translate

In plain English

Metaphorically speaking

I think, therefore, I explain



Translate

In plain English

Avoid, or define, all medical terms.

Assume your patient has no knowledge of the significance of medical terms or hospital procedures.

Translate

Metaphorically speaking

Use metaphors to explain medical vernacular.

Use concrete comparisons.

Customize your analogies to your audience.

Translate

I think, therefore, I explain

Explain your thought processes.

Describe your decision tree.

Remember, your rationale may appear illogical.

Admire

Give complimentary gifts

Be enthusiastic

Make a little small talk

Admire

Give complimentary gifts



Pay compliments every chance you get.

Thank your patients whenever you can.

Compliment visitors and family, too.

Admire

Be enthusiastic

Show that you are sincerely interested in their welfare.

Let your patients know how important they are.

Say, “I’m glad you came in,” *at least* once per visit.

Admire

Make a little small talk

Ask a few non-medical questions about your patient's life.

Display some awe.

Be Gracious

Sorry 'bout that

Ask. Don't tell

Will the real provider, please sit down

Smile

Be Gracious

Sorry 'bout that

Apologize for delays.

Apologize for any imperfections.

Apologize for other people.

Be Gracious

Ask, don't tell

Make *suggestions* and *recommendations*.

Avoid power struggles.

Do not demand, order or threaten.

Be Gracious

Will the real provider, please sit down

Be seated, whenever possible, for interactions.

Avoid towering over people.

Any asymmetry in your posture denotes that you are relaxed.

Be Gracious

Smile

Laugh at your patients' jokes!

Gentle humor releases your patient's tension.

A warm smile is a lovely gift.

In Summary...

No matter how good your clinical skills, you will not be perceived as being a “good nurse” or a “good doctor” or a “good provider” if you are not compassionate, respectful and humble.

Thank You



Questions?

Visit us at
www.LoveYourPatients.org

Love Your Patients!, Inc.