

3 Communication Tips for Stressful Times



In stressful situations, the smallest misunderstandings can cause anxious patients to become upset or worse. Use these quick tips to put your patients at ease:

“

Hello, Ms. Brown, or would you rather me call you Olivia? I'm going to ask you some questions about your symptoms before we transfer you to a new room. Before I do, is there anything you'd like to share with me? I know you probably have a lot of concerns right now.

”

Use the patient's name

- Build rapport and trust by asking the patient's preference, whether first name, or Mr. or Ms.

Keep explanations simple

- Avoid medical jargon if possible. If you must use medical jargon, try to break down the information using basic terms
- Verify understanding by asking your patient to repeat what they've heard back to you

Acknowledge feelings

- Give your patients space to talk about their concerns by asking open-ended questions and listening attentively
- Thank them for sharing and explain how you will help them while they are in your care

Adapted from **NCHARGE® Employee Engagement and the Patient Experience**

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PURPOSE

Stressful situations can lead to unintended breakdowns in communication. Use this tool to remind your team members of simple communication techniques they can use to decrease stress and anxiety for their patients.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Share this tool individually or with your entire team. If used in a huddle or other team meeting, allow a few minutes to review the infographic.
2. Ask the individual or team members to think of a recent patient interaction that did or did not go well. (It could be a conversation they had themselves or one they observed.)
3. Use these questions to prompt discussion and reflection:
 - As you think back, what could have been done differently during the conversation to produce an even better outcome?
 - What other phrases, recommendations, or tips have you learned that would be helpful to use when patients are anxious or fearful?