

# Demonstrating empathy

A leaflet for healthcare staff



*Making conversations easier*

# Demonstrating empathy

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3. To support and take action



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# Demonstrating empathy

## 1. To understand

> **Get**

*Tell me more*

*Go on*

*Take your time*

*That's ok*

### TIP

**Get** that it's emotion and tune into the emotion you detect. Go there. Give your presence. Drop your agenda or your urge to 'fix' and just listen. We do not need to resolve emotions. Respond with 'connection' not information. This is the emotional component of empathy. By tuning in to what other people are feeling, you have accomplished the first step towards demonstrating empathy.



### Communication skills

- ☐ Active listening
- ☐ Non-verbal behaviours
- ☐ Picking up on cues
- ☐ Mirror the patient
- ☐ Open questions
- ☐ Pauses
- ☐ Slow down
- ☐ Use silence
- ☐ Facilitation ("What else?")
- ☐ Non-judgemental response ("That's ok")



# Demonstrating empathy

## 2. To communicate that understanding

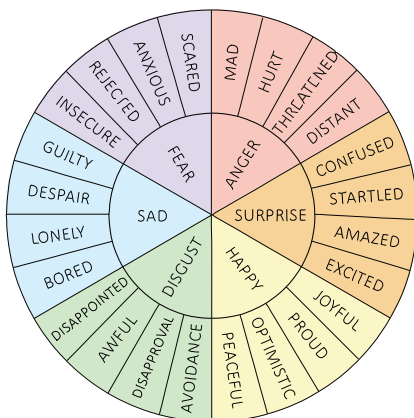
> Identify

> Validate

When it comes to emotions, the first and most important thing we can do is to identify the emotion that we see or hear. This is the *cognitive* component of empathy, referring to recognising another person's perspective and communicating this back to them.

Paul Ekman, an American psychologist identified six basic emotions, including **anger**, **joy**, **surprise**, **fear**, **sadness** and **disgust**. More complex emotions include embarrassment, envy, pride, shame and guilt. A physical prop like the Wheel of Emotions can be useful to build your vocabulary for emotions and identify which emotions the person is feeling.

### Wheel of Emotions



# Demonstrating empathy

*You sound worried  
when you say that*

*From what you say, it's  
been really tough for you*

*I can see that you  
are really frustrated  
with everything  
that's going on*

*It sounds like you have felt  
overwhelmed at times*

*We often hear...  
It's not unusual...  
Many people find that...*



## TIP

**Identify** what you hear or see and name it, if that feels appropriate. (Note: describing or naming the emotion or behaviours may be an internal step rather than shared). **Validate** by acknowledging and normalising feelings.

## Communication skills

- ☐ Summaries
- ☐ Make suggestions
- ☐ Non-verbal behaviours



# Demonstrating empathy

## 3. To support and take action

### > Explore

Using the skills of positive regard, non-judgement and curiosity we can create a safe space to explore emotions. This is the *motivational* component of empathy, referring to the concern one might have for another person's state and desiring to improve it (often referred to as compassion).

*What is your main concern?*

*What do you already know about..?*

*Can you tell me what is on your mind?*



# Demonstrating empathy



## TIP

We may feel we do not have time to ‘give’. However, it need only take a few moments to identify, validate and explore emotion. Using good communication skills to demonstrate empathy can build relationships, enhance trust, and allow greater understanding and collaboration.

## Communication skills

- ☐ Identify starting point and main concern
- ☐ Avoid jargon
- ☐ Chunk & check
- ☐ Invite questions
- ☐ Structure the discussion



# Demonstrating empathy



*The patient will never care how much you know, until they know how much you care.*

Terry Canale, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Vice Presidential Address (2000)

## G.I.V.E. to connect, understand, and support



### Get

that it's emotion



### Identify

the emotion



### Validate

by acknowledging feelings



### Explore

to better understand the emotion

[www.hse.ie/nhcprogramme](http://www.hse.ie/nhcprogramme)



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Special thanks to Dr Laura K. Rock, Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School for sharing her work on improving emotional interactions using the mnemonic G.I.V.E.

