

Demonstrating Empathy

A leaflet for healthcare staff



Making conversations easier

Demonstrating Empathy

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1. To understand
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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

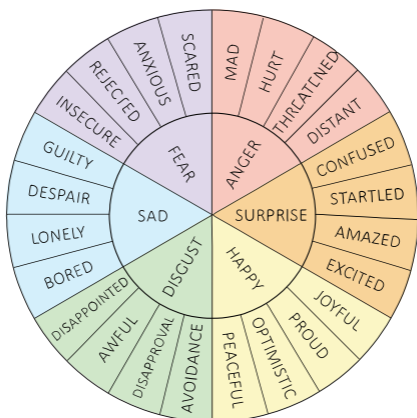
> Identify

> 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



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