

Conversations with healthcare professionals are very important to patients because often they've waited a long time to see a healthcare professional and often the night before their appointment, people are mulling over in their minds the sorts of questions that they have that they want to be answered. They may focus a lot of of their understanding on this conversation with the healthcare professional. We have to understand how important those conversations are to people and to go at a pace that people can understand and to make sure that we do the best and that we respond to people's questions and their concerns.

Don't forget, the first conversation you have with your patients is so important. Speak at a slow and gentle pace, because this will really help them to understand the situation.

When you talk to patients, when you communicate with patients and family, I think the most important quality is just being sensitive. Sometimes they are overwhelmed with the amount of information and bad prognosis. Many patients, you know, they are scared of hospice. They are very scared of the setting.

They usually think that's the last place and they will not gonna make alive from here. So you have to basically be honest with them, but at the same time, try to make this time over here to be comfortable and, you know, reassuring as much as possible.

And the first time we meet somebody to make them realize that this is not our agenda, it's their agenda. It's what they need is so important. And even if we spend 15 minutes and the person's tired and we come back later, if we can just show that we are approachable and we're there for them, that impression will really help in any relationship that's ongoing.

Don't forget, for many, any healthcare environment can be a frightening place. Always try and be sensitive when speaking to patients and their relatives.

We make a distinction between sympathy and empathy in a professional situation, and sympathy is when you're showing concern for someone, but it's from your own experience. So you may be saying to someone, I've heard that your mother has died. I'm very sorry about that. But my father died a couple of years ago and I felt awful for six months or so.

And so that's come from your own experience. But empathy is to do with trying to understand what it what the person is experiencing. So you're not making any assumptions about what that is. So you might start by asking how the person is feeling rather than making an assumption that they feel in a particular way.

If we are being sympathetic, we're listening, we're appreciating, but we're not really looking at the needs of those people. And what we really need to understand is what they need, not what service they fit into, not what we know is on offer, but what they need.

And things that perhaps are good ways to show empathy. I'd say, you know, I understand you just had a really rotten time or that sounds like it's a really difficult situation. Tell me a bit more about it. So you're

showing that you're interested in what's happening, your acknowledging that the situation is distressing and upsetting and asking to explore a bit more surrounding that.

Don't forget. It is sympathetic to compare the patient's experiences to your own, however, it is preferable in most situations to be empathetic where you try to understand what the patient is experiencing.

Empathy can be conveyed very, very simply from the moment you walk into a patient's environment. So if you're going into the patient's home, you should be respectful, introducing yourself by name and explaining your role for the patient and also asking for the patient's permission, whether it's to do a really simple thing like wash them or to ask them questions about their medical history, we should always be asking their permission and explaining why we're doing the things that we can do.

And that's the very start of building up an empathetic relationship.

Don't forget, always be respectful when visiting a patient's home, seek their permission for everything you do.