

Verbal Communication

CHS 446

**Communication Skills for the
Healthcare Professional**

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Verbal Communication



- The lack of effective communication is the single most common cause of patient complaints. As a healthcare professional (HCP), you simply must have good **verbal communication** skills.
- From the initial job interview through the promotion process, a professional's ability to communicate verbally is continually assessed by hiring committees and supervisors.

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- Most important, is that an HCP who has strong communication skills will always be more effective in helping patients.
- However, it is important also to remember that being a good verbal communicator is not simply a matter of having a large vocabulary or the ability to use highly technical language.

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- Being a good communicator consists of maximizing the effectiveness with which you understand what others are trying to tell you and accurately conveying what you want to say.
- As a future HCP, you can not afford to have weak verbal communication skills.



Verbal Communication

- **verbal communication** is the use of spoken words and sounds to successfully transfer a message from the sender to the receiver.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We may often think that, having good communication skills is all about the ability to speak well.....

Or

All about **"SPEAKING."**

But

Verbal Communication has another very important part..... **"LISTENING".**

**Speaking
+
Listening
is
Verbal Communication**

Verbal Communication

Content and Word Choice

- The content must be as clear as possible, and this means that the speaker must have a clear understanding of what they mean to say.
- The speaker should avoid unclear, ambiguous, or unnecessarily technical language.
- The HCP professional who communicate effectively will have a clear sense of what they want to say and they will say it using appropriate word choice

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Grammar and Pronunciation

- Incorrect grammar can obstruct the clarity of message , and just As important, can diminish the confidence the listener has the speaker knows what they are talking about.
- The same holds for pronunciation. Incorrect pronunciation inhibits understanding and can cause mistrust.

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Tone

- The tone with which the HCP speaks to the patient is vital to the therapeutic relationship because it indicates an understanding of the patient's needs and enhances the HCP's ability to meet those needs.
- Generally speaking, the tone the HCP uses should be relaxed and conversational, helping to establish a connection with the patient.

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Three types of Tone

- Expressive Tone is spontaneous, emotional, and uninhibited. We use this tone, for instance, when we express our feelings, tell jokes, or complain—when we socialize.
- This is generally not a tone of voice the HCP should use when speaking to patients, because it takes the focus of the discussion off the patient and puts it on the HCP

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Three types of Tone

- The HCP should make every effort to let the patient know that the patient's needs are the reason for the visit.
- Research indicates that patients do not usually appreciate an emotional or even joking tone from their HCPs.

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Directive Tone

- A directive tone is authoritative and judgmental. This is the tone one uses to give orders, exert leadership, or pass judgment.
- The directive tone is an indication that there exists a difference in professional rank between the speaker and the listener.

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Directive Tone

- The directive tone is generally not an appropriate tone for the HCP to use when speaking to patients.
- Patients come into the practice seeking expert treatment that include understanding and empathy on the part of the healthcare team.

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Directive Tone

- Consider the following two examples involving a nurse whose patient has an upper respiratory infection.
- The patient's doctor has prescribed an antibiotic to fight the infection. In the first example, the nurse orders the patient to comply, and in the second, instructs the patient about the benefits of compliance

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Directive Tone

- Ordering the patient: *“I am telling you. Do not miss a single dose of this pill. If you do, your infection won’t go away and you ‘ll feel even worse”.*
- Explaining to the patient: *“taking these pills regularly will achieve the best results. You ‘ll do a better job of fighting the infection.*

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Problem Solving Tone

- The problem solving tone is rational, objective, and unbiased. This is the tone we use to indicate to the listener that we are using the analytical portion of our brains to come to the correct answer about a certain set of circumstances.
- This is the tone the HCP uses most frequently when serving patients' needs.

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Problem Solving Tone

- A significant part of the allied health professional's job consists of verbally collecting important information from the patient and providing explanations and solutions to the patient.
- The problem solving tone is what the patient rightfully expect from the HCP.

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Emphasis

- By this time, it should be clear that how you say something is often just as important as what you want to say. Even within a sentence, the emphasis you place on certain words or parts of a sentence can lead to vastly different interpretations by the patient.

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Small Talk

- Small talk is what we say to each other before we begin to discuss the business at hand. Small talk is talk about the weather, the local sports team, and traffics and why the patient was late getting to the doctor's office.
- Small talk is not talk about emotional, personal, or controversial subjects.

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Small Talk

- An HCP can use small talk to help a nervous patient feel more at ease, taking some of the feelings of pressure off the patient.
- When the patient is more comfortable, they will be able to discuss their case.
- Small talk should be viewed and used as a tool for building a bond with the patient.

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Using Commentary

- Sometimes the HCP must focus on some task that is part of the care process but is not part of directly engaging the patient in questions and answers.
- These tasks can range from the unpleasant, such as changing a colostomy bag, or cleaning an infected intravenous (IV) site, or entering data into the patient's file on a computer.

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Using Commentary

- It is helpful to the process if the HCP briefly comments on what they are doing, just to keep the interaction alive and allow the patient to remain engaged in the active role they take in their care.
- Such commenting, moreover, can ease fear and reduce anxiety for the patient.

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Using Commentary and Small Talk

- One should remember, though, that strategies such as small talk and commentary are best used to build and strengthen rapport with patients.
- When used too frequently or for excessive amounts of time these techniques can become distracting to the patient.

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Important Practice for Effective Verbal Communication with Patients and Other HCPs

Send a Clear Message

- An effective message is a clear message, it is crucial that the information you provide to the patient is clear and unambiguous.

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Important Practice for Effective Verbal Communication with Patients and Other HCPs

Use standard language and not a slang

- A patient comes to a practice expecting to receive expert care, and the use of the standard language by the HCP is a signal that expert care is, in fact, what the patient will receive.

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Important Practice for Effective Verbal Communication with Patients and Other HCPs

Avoid Using Medical Jargon When Speaking to the Patient

- Many professions have specialized language that is used primarily by those who work in the profession when communicating among themselves. Such a specialized language is called jargon.

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Important Practice for Effective Verbal Communication with Patients and Other HCPs

Talk to the Patient, not at the Patient, and Be a Good Listener

- Making sure that you talk *to the patient* and not at them is a way of showing respect for the patient and their concerns. This involves providing some nonverbal cues to the patient, such as facing the patient directly and making appropriate eye contact, letting them know that when they speak you are listening carefully.

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Important Practice for Effective Verbal Communication with Patients and Other HCPs

Help the Patient to Be a Good Listener

- This begins with speaking in a conversational and relaxed manner, and by using vocabulary and language that are appropriate.
- Use your own words to repeat back to the patient what they have told you to verify that they agree with their own version.

THANK YOU