

# Communication skills

## for **Building Relationships**

### #1. GREETINGS & INTRODUCTIONS

*Hello, my name is Linda Ryan and I am the doctor/nurse/physiotherapist looking after you today. What is your name?*

*John Grace*

*How do you like to be called?*

*Johnny*

*And who is with you here today?*

*My daughter Mary*

### #2. NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOUR



Warm facial expression



Good eye contact



Open body language



Appropriate volume, slow pace & warm tone of voice



Keep the focus on the patient while making notes or using the computer

### #3. INVOLVE THE PATIENT



Establish that the patient can hear and understand you



Share your thinking

*What I am thinking now is...*



Ask permission for what you are doing

*Is it ok if I take your blood pressure?*

### #4. EMPATHY G.I.V.E.



**Get**

Pause when you notice emotion



**Identify**

*"I can see that you are worried"*



**Validate**

*"It's overwhelming – everything you've been going through"*



**Explore**

*"Tell me more"*



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



# Communication skills

## for **Initiating the Consultation**

### #1. PREPARE



#### Prepare yourself

- Personal appearance
- Complete any outstanding tasks



#### Prepare the environment

- Pen, paper, healthcare record
- Ensure privacy
- Turn phone to silent



#### Prepare your information

- Read records carefully
- Summarise what you know
- Consider your agenda

### #2. ESTABLISH INITIAL RAPPORT



- Greet patient
- Obtain patient's name



- Introduce yourself, your role and the nature of the consultation

- Check how patient prefers to be addressed



- Obtain consent

- Demonstrate respect and interest



- Tell the patient what you have done to prepare for the consultation

***I have read the letter from the GP***

### #3. IDENTIFY THE REASONS FOR THE CONSULTATION



- Begin with an open question

***How can we help you today?***



- Listen attentively without interrupting



- Elicit list of issues to discuss
- Screen for further problems

***What else?***



- Negotiate agenda
- Summarise shared agenda

***How does that sound?***



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# Communication skills

## for **Gathering Information**

### #1. EXPLORE THE PATIENT'S PROBLEM

Encourage the patient to tell their story

*Tell me about the problem*

Screen for other problems and symptoms

*What else?*

Use summaries

*Can I just check I've got it right - the problem started two weeks ago...*

Use a mixture of open and closed questions

*Have you noticed any changes in your sleeping?*

Listen attentively without interrupting

Respond to non-verbal cues

*You look sad when you talk about your mother*

Use easy to understand language

### #2. UNDERSTAND THE PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Use **I.C.E.** to establish what the patient is thinking

**I IDEAS**  
What has the patient been thinking about their problem?  
*"Why do you think this has happened?"*

**C CONCERNS**  
Sometimes a patient may have concerns that you have not considered  
*"What has been the main worry for you?"*

**E EXPECTATIONS**  
What does the patient think might be the appropriate action?  
*"What do you think might be the best way forward?"*

**Feelings**  
Respond to verbal or non-verbal cues

*I can see that this has been frustrating for you*

**Effects of illness**  
Use open questions to explore this

*How is this affecting you?*

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# Communication skills

## for Providing Information and Planning

### #1. PROVIDE CORRECT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF INFORMATION

- Assess the patient's starting point
- Break the information into 'chunks'. Check the patient's understanding of each chunk

*We covered a lot today. To make sure that I've explained things clearly, can you tell me...*

- Ask what other information would be useful
- Avoid giving advice or reassurance prematurely

### #2. AID PATIENT RECALL AND UNDERSTANDING

- Use easy to understand language
- Slow down
- Organise the explanation/signpost

*First I want to tell you about... & then I am going to talk about...*

- Use visual aids
- Check understanding

*What questions do you have for me now?*

### #3. INCORPORATE THE PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

- Relate explanation to the patient's ideas, concerns and expectations

*You said you were worried the pain was angina...*

- Respond to non-verbal cues

*You look worried*

- Allow opportunity for patients to contribute



### #4. SHARED DECISION MAKING AND PLANNING

- Share your thinking/offer suggestions & choices

*I think that there are two options that we should discuss*

- Encourage patient to contribute their ideas

*What are your thoughts on this?*

- Explore options with the patient
- Establish the patient's preferences

*What matters most to you?*

- Negotiate the plan

*Now that we had a chance to discuss your treatment options, which treatment do you think is right for you?*

- Check with the patient

*Can I just check you are happy with this plan?*

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# Communication skills

## for **Closing the Consultation**

### #1. FORWARD PLAN

#### Next steps

- Agree next steps for you and for the patient
- Emphasise support

***“We are here to support you if you want to talk some more”***

#### Safety-netting

- Discuss what to do if the plan is not working, when and how to seek help
- Be clear on where the patient can find information
- Offer written summary, instructions or notes

### #2. ENSURE APPROPRIATE POINT OF CLOSURE



#### Summarise

- Briefly summarise what was discussed  
***“So just to review, we talked about...”***
- Clarify plan of care



#### Final check

- Check that the patient agrees and is comfortable with the plan
- Ask for any additional questions
- Ask the patient to tell you the most important things they will take from the consultation

***Before you leave, let's recap.  
What are the main things you  
are going to do to manage  
your asthma at home?***



Observe the patient's non verbals to judge if the patient appears ready to finish the consultation

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# Communication skills

## for **Providing Structure**



### #1 MAKE ORGANISATION OVERT

- Agree the agenda  
*"First I want to find out... and then I want us to talk about..."*
- Summarise throughout  
*"So your appetite has not been the same and..."*
- Signpost  
*"Ok, so now let's talk about..."*
- Clarify for family members how consultation will proceed  
*"What I would like to do is hear from your mum and then you can tell me what has been worrying you"*



### #2 ATTEND TO FLOW

- Apply a logical structure to the consultation
- Keep to time

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