Creating Positive Conversations With Patients

With a focus on Giving Bad News

with

MYRA GOLDEN
It’s at the point that we have to give bad news that things tend to escalate.
How not to give bad news.
Where did the employee go wrong with us?

LET ME KNOW IN THE CHAT.
A doctor inspired me to learn the best way to give bad news.
4 KEYS TO GIVING BAD NEWS

Clearly explain the situation
Acknowledge concern
Manage expectations
Guide to the next steps
Challenging scenarios we’ll take on in this training.
A patient is significantly late to their appointment and the front desk staff member has to deliver the news that they will not be seen that day.
Appointments are running behind schedule due to provider back-up.
A staff member is helping a patient who is irritated because their phone call has been transferred between a couple of different departments at the health center.
A patient returns to the health center after having a discussion with their physician regarding receiving a specific intervention/referral (i.e., prescription, referral to a program, or a physician attestation regarding disability and/or illness). The physician has made a clinical decision to not provide this patient with that referral, and the front desk staff member must communicate this to the patient.
We’ll start with keys to bad news, and move on to other frameworks.
4 KEYS TO GIVING BAD NEWS

Clearly explain the situation
Acknowledge concern
Manage expectations
Guide to the next steps
BE CLEAR

KEY ACTION 1

How: Explain the issue.

Be brief - No preamble, no fluff, no excessive apology

Be assertive - not passive, not aggressive/defensive

Be confident in your delivery
ACKNOWLEDGE IMPACT

KEY ACTION 2

Why: Recognizing the person’s concern helps you preempt escalation and move the person from the emotional right-brain to a focus on resolving the issue.

How: One sentence to recognize the inconvenience:

“I know this delay throws off your entire day/schedule....”

“I realize this puts you in a bind.”

“We want to get you in with the doctor as much as you want that.”
ALLOW THE PERSON TO RESPOND

KEY ACTION 3

Why: Pausing to let the person respond protects you from over-explaining or losing confidence, and it gives them a chance to express emotions or ask questions.

How: After key action 2, pause.
MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

KEY ACTION 4

Why:
To prevent further disappointment by establishing what you can realistically achieve.

How:
Be transparent
Avoid assumptions
Keep customers apprised

Are there options you can offer?
PRACTICE GIVING BAD NEWS

A. Apply the 4 keys to this scenario: A patient is significantly late to their appointment and the front desk staff member has to deliver the news that they will not be seen that day.

B. Apply the 4 keys to this scenario: Appointments are running behind schedule due to provider back-up.

THE PERSON WHO MOST RECENTLY GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL WILL LEAD THIS DISCUSSION.
Adopt & Apply
More help for creating positive conversations
CREATING COMMON GROUND

Validation
Optioning
Pacing
VALIDATION

“It seems like...”

“It sounds like...”

“It looks like...”
The more options a person has, the more likely they are to calm down without de-escalation tactics.
PACING

Pace urgency

Pace with agreement

If you outpace, walk it back
Adopt & Apply
PRACTICE OPPORTUNITY

A. A patient returns to the health center after having a discussion with their physician regarding receiving a specific intervention/referral (i.e., prescription, referral to a program, or a physician attestation regarding disability and/or illness). The physician has made a clinical decision to not provide this patient with that referral, and the front desk staff member must communicate this to the patient.

Or

B. A staff member is helping a patient who is irritated because their phone call has been transferred between a couple of different departments at the health center.

THE PERSON WHO HAS THE MOST SIBLINGS WILL LEAD THIS DISCUSSION.
Meeting un-expressed needs
TAKE THAT FIRST STEP
Pause & Capture Ideas

Start
Stop
Continue
Thank you!