

Principles of Good Communication

Communication is a 'two-way' process involving an exchange of information, views and feelings between patients, their families and staff. Getting communication right can help patients to approach the end of life by helping them to feel supported and valued. Patients will be more likely to share their fears and concerns with staff. Good communication has been shown to improve patients' emotional health, their function, blood pressure, and to reduce reported pain and drug use. Good communication can also increase job satisfaction for staff and has similar effects on reducing stress.

Good communication is important throughout the end of life care pathway

Importance of Body Language

We can promote rapport and so develop more meaningful and effective communication by understanding others body language and by considering our own

Non-verbal communication

Consider:

- Facial expression
- Level of eye contact
- Personal space
- Your Posture
- Gestures

Listening

One of the best ways to communicate is to stop talking and to listen. Listening is more than hearing what is said - it is an attempt to understand the meaning behind the words

Using Open Focused Questions

Encourage patients to open up by asking questions like '**How have you been feeling since your treatment started?**'

Communication Barriers for Patients

- Language barriers
- Fear of getting upset/emotional
- Tiredness/illness
- Feeling like a burden/taking up time
- Consider staff too busy or not interested

Communication Barriers for Staff

- Language barriers
- Not knowing what to say
- Fear of dealing with strong emotions
- Not knowing enough

Tips for good communication

- Consider setting: right place, adequate time, no distractions/interruptions, privacy
- Introduction and greet appropriately
- Show mutual respect
- Use active listening
- Demonstrate empathy
- Acknowledge feelings
- Give each other space
- Maintain appropriate eye contact
- Use language that patient understands and avoid medical or technical jargon
- Repetition can help people to understand and remember information given to them
- Don't give too much information at one time - only what is needed
- Open focused questions can encourage patients to talk
- Silence can enable people to gather their thoughts
- Training can improve your skills in communication

Find out about the e-learning modules in end of life care at: <http://www.e-elca.org.uk>