



THE CENTER FOR HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION

P O Box 18819 • Cleveland, OH 44118-0819
1-800-677-3256 / 440-338-3056 • 440-338-3076 FAX
Info@CommunicatingWithPatients.com • www.CommunicatingWithPatients.com

10 Top Tips for Communicating with Patients

By Edward Leigh, MA

1. During the interview, periodically use the patient's name. This will give your interaction a friendly tone.
2. Start with an open question and then let the patient talk without interrupting for 1-2 minutes. Give them an opportunity to talk – they will tell you what you need to know.
3. When talking to a patient give direct attention with both your eyes and body. Think of forming a "square" between you and the patient.
4. Observe a patient's nonverbal behaviors. Do they appear anxious or sad? Are their hands or legs Trembling?
5. Use empathy to connect on a psychosocial level. Use reflective communication, such as, "That sounds very stressful."
6. Convert closed questions to open questions to gather more information. For example, change, "Do you eat a lot fast foods?" to "Tell me about your diet."
7. Bond with people on a personal level. Learn about the patient's family, occupation and hobbies. Powerful relationship builder.
8. Partner with a patient instead of giving orders. Work together to find a mutually agreed upon plan.
9. Avoid using medical jargon. For example, say "kidney" instead of "renal."
10. Always have a pad of paper available to sketch a diagram or give a patient additional information, such as a helpful website.

About the Author

Edward Leigh, MA, is the Founder & Director of The Center for Healthcare Communication. Through the use of effective communication skills, he focuses on enhancing the patient experience and decreasing medical errors. He presents high-energy and informative programs to hospitals, medical practices, corporations and healthcare associations. He also coaches healthcare professionals and consults with healthcare organizations to create outstanding patient care. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Health Education. He appears on many national television shows, including interviews on The Montel Williams Show, MSNBC News and The Today Show, where Katie Couric interviewed him. The Discovery Health Channel Show did a 30-minute documentary on his own personal healthcare story. He is the author of the book, *Communicating with Patients*.

Contact information:

Edward Leigh, MA
Founder & Director
Center for Healthcare Communication
P O Box 18819
Cleveland, OH 44118-0819
1-800-677-3256 / 440-338-3056
440-338-3076 FAX

Email: Info@CommunicatingWithPatients.com
Website: www.CommunicatingWithPatients.com
Blog: www.HealthcareCommunication.Wordpress.com
Twitter: www.Twitter.com/EdwardLeigh
Facebook: www.Facebook.com/EdwardLeigh

© 2010 Center for Healthcare Communication. All Rights Reserved.