



VITALtalk

Delivering Serious News

*Delivering
Serious
News*



Serious Illness Communication Skills Training

- Delivering Serious News
 - GUIDE
- Conducting Goals of Care Conversations
 - Part 1 - Reframing: We're in a Different Place
 - Part 2 - Mapping the Future: Clarifying Priorities
 - Part 3 - Aligning with Patient Values
 - Part 4 - Discussing Life-Sustaining Treatments

Why is Delivering Serious News Hard?

- ✓ We feel sad ourselves
- ✓ We don't know the right words to say
- ✓ Emotions are strong and we don't know how to respond

What We Will Learn

- ✓ GUIDE: A 'Talking Map'
- ✓ Tools for responding to patient emotion

How We Will Learn

- ✓ Define skills (lecture)
- ✓ Observe skills in action (videos)
- ✓ Practice

GUIDE: A Talking Map for Serious News

- › **Get Ready**
- › **Understand** *what the patient knows*
- › **Inform** *starting with a headline*
- › **Demonstrate** *empathy*
- › **Equip** *the patient for the next step.*

GUIDE: Get Ready

- › Have a plan in mind
- › Who should be in the room
- › Conducive setting
 - Find a private space
 - Sign out pager or set to vibrate
- › Tissue
- › Allot adequate time

GUIDE: Understand

- › Ask current understanding
 - “Tell me what you understand is going on with your illness?”
 - “What have the other doctors told you?”
- › When you give serious news, your patient is learning. Start from what they know already.

GUIDE: Inform

- › How much information does the patient want?
- › Ask permission
 - “Is now a good time to talk?”
- › Use a soft start
 - “The test did not come back as we were hoping”

GUIDE: Inform

- › Get to the point with a one - sentence headline.
 - Short, discrete chunks
 - “The CT scan shows that the cancer has gotten worse”
- › Leave silence so your patient can take it in
 - Pause after giving information
 - You may need to give more details, but first make sure your patient takes in the headline.

GUIDE: Demonstrate Empathy

- › Expect the patient's first response to be emotion.
- › Attend to that emotion BEFORE moving on
- › Tools to show that you see the emotion:
 - Naming
 - Acknowledging

Naming Emotion

- › Naming emotions helps patients...
 - Know they've been heard
 - Identify what they are feeling

- › Best done as a suggestion or humble question
 - “Some people would be angry”
 - “I’m wondering if you’re feeling sad.”



Acknowledging Emotion

- › A statement that conveys the clinician is trying to understand what the patient is going through
 - “It must be hard”
- › You can’t truly understand patient experience, but you can show that you’re trying
- › **Don’t say:**

 - “I understand exactly what you’re feeling”



GUIDE: Equip

- › Make a plan for next steps
- › Be as concrete as possible
 - “We’ll get a CT scan on Tuesday, and I’ll see you the next day so we can discuss options”
- › Confirm that you and patient are on same page
 - “To make sure I explained things well, could you tell me in your own words what you now understand?”



Greg Wilkinson
Prostate Cancer

Time to Practice!!

Drill Instructions

- › Review drill as a group
- › Divide into pairs to practice the drill
- › Practice **two** drill scripts (person with bigger feet is the clinician first, small feet is the patient)
- › Switch roles
- › Debrief with one another
 - How did it feel to say the words?

Drill A: Understand what the patient knows

Clinician



What's your understanding of what's going on with your illness?

Would you like me to share what I know?

Patient



No one's really told me anything.

Yes, that would be really helpful.

Drill A: Give a headline

Clinician



Is now an okay time to talk about the tests?

I'm afraid I have serious news. The cancer has come back in your liver and lung.

I know this is quite a shock.

Patient



I suppose as good as any. What is it?

In my liver AND my lung? How can that be?

I just can't believe this.

Drill Instructions: Swap Roles

Patient



Clinician



Drill: Debrief

- › How did it feel to say the words?
- › One thing clinician noticed
- › One thing patient noticed

Drill B: Demonstrate empathy (naming statement)

Patient



I've just been going to all these doctors appointments and getting all these tests, and I don't know...

Yes, exactly, so much is going on and I don't know what to do...

Clinician



It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed.

Drill B: Demonstrate empathy (acknowledge)

Patient



No one's really telling me what's going on. Is this treatment working or not?

It's just so scary. I'm really worried.

Clinician



I can't even imagine what it's like for you to be going through this.

Drill Instructions: Swap Roles

Clinician



Patient



Drill: Debrief 2

- › How did it feel to say the words?
- › One thing clinician noticed
- › One thing patient noticed



What surprised you?

What do you want to take forward?

Anywhere you might get stuck?

Summary

- › GUIDE: A 'Talking Map' for delivering serious news
- › Responding to patient emotion
 - Name
 - Acknowledge
- › What's one thing you're going to try this week?

Delivering Serious News and Goals of Care Conversations training materials were developed and made available for public use through U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs contracts with VitalTalk

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VA



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