

How to Deal with Challenging Patients

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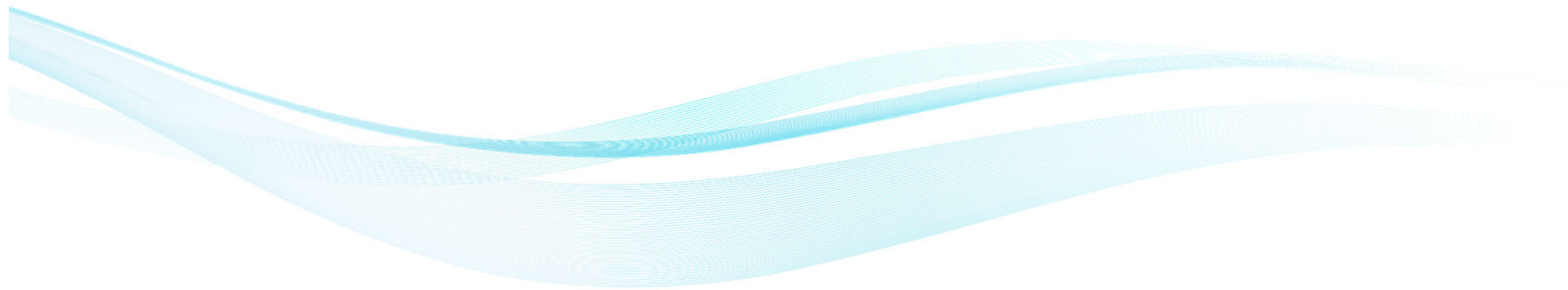


Objectives

- Better understand the reasons behind challenging behavior in our patients
- Identify at least 3 tools or tactics available to defuse difficult situations
- Name 3 ways to manage anxious patients



Conflict Activity



Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons you are standing where you are?
2. If where you are standing signifies your initial reaction, where might you stand after taking some time to think about the conflict?
3. What are some things that would cause you to move?
4. How might our reactions influence the course of the conflict?



Why Do Patients Become Challenging?

- Feel sick or in pain
- Alcohol/Substance/Medication use or misuse
- Fear, Anxiety
- Language/Communication difficulties
- Unrealistic expectations
- Previous experiences
- Frustration
- (Untreated) Mental Health Diagnosis



What affects behavior? Know your patient

Medical condition

- Dementia/Alzheimer's
- Brain injury
- Stroke
- Mental Health Diagnosis
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Depression or Anxiety

Psychosocial issues

- Life experiences
- Relationship/family issues
- Social status (finances, employment, education)
- Race
- Religion



Source of the Issue

Understanding the source can help with the solution

- Poor communication with/by staff?
- Where is the patient in grieving process?
- How does the patient feel about the changes and demands created by their ESRD diagnosis?
- New medical diagnosis?
- Lack of control?



Look for signs

- Body language
 - Tightened Jaw
 - Tense posture
 - Clenched fists
 - Fidgeting
 - Raised voice
- Demanding excessive attention
- A talkative person all of sudden becomes quiet



You see the signs, now what?

- **Assess** the situation, immediate attention or wait
 - If it can wait have the conversation off the treatment floor
- **Understand** how **you** react to conflict
 - Watch your own body language
- **Recognize and accept** that patients have the right to disagree, question or refuse medical recommendations



You see the signs, now what?

- Help the patient vent his/her feelings in a productive manner
 - Use active listening
 - Clarify what you heard; Restate what patient has said
- Spend time with the patient
- Respond calmly and with respect -Avoid becoming defensive
- Stay professional – set boundaries



Defuse the situation

- **Remain Calm**; avoid becoming defensive
- **Listen** to what is being said; use active listening
 - Clarify and restate
- **Acknowledge** their grievance; reassure their rights
 - Provide an opportunity to explain what has angered them
- **Maintain eye contact** but not for long periods (no stare down)
- **Stay professional** – set boundaries
 - Remember it is not about winning
- **Keep a safe distance** from the patient



Once they have calmed down:

- Acknowledge their feelings matching your words to their level of anger
- Express regret about the situation
- Let the patient know that you understand
- Try and find some point of agreement
 - Ask patient for solution to the problem - Brainstorm
 - “Do you have some suggestions on ways to solve this problem?”
 - “How would you like to see this resolved?”



Implement the agreement

- Only make promises you and your team can keep
- Make sure the entire IDT is aware of the agreement
- Be consistent with agreements that are made
- Check back in after agreement is made to assess if it has addressed the issue
 - Be prepared to make adjustments if there are still some concerns



Common situations

Anxiety, Anger, Manipulation and Aggression



Anxiety

- Signs of an anxious patient
 - Feeling nervous, restless or tense
 - Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom
 - Having an increased heart rate
 - Breathing rapidly
 - Sweating
 - Trebling
 - Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry
 - Having the urge to avoid things that trigger anxiety

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>



Medical Problems Linked to Anxiety

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- COPD
- Drug misuse/or withdrawal
- Chronic pain
- Irritable bowel syndrome

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>



Ways to manage anxiety

- Let your patient be heard
- Explain the what and the why
 - Let them know everything you are doing and why you are doing it
- Show a patient how to 'relax', don't tell them
 - Ask what you can do to help them relax
 - Give directions, like 'breathe through your nose out through your mouth'
- Make an effort to lighten the mood and be personable
- Be empathetic



Angry and Manipulative patients

Angry Patients can be:

- Frightened
- Defensive
- Resistant to what is happening

Manipulative Patients can:

- Threaten:
 - *“I am going to call the state”*
 - *“My lawyer will hear about this”*
- “Sweet talk”
- Cry
- Throw temper tantrums



Angry and Manipulative patients will

- Will try and draw you into a shouting match
- Pull on your own angry emotions
- Bait you into becoming verbally aggressive



Tips to use with Angry and Manipulative Patients

- Calm yourself
- Avoid negative language directed at the patient such as
 - “you neglected to...,” *indicates they are lying*
 - “you should...” *indicates judgement*
- Use positive language such as
 - “it seems we have different viewpoint of the situation”
 - “an option open to you...”
- Watch your body language



Aggressive Behavior

- Physically or Verbally Abusive
 - Patients try to throw things at you
 - Call names, use racial or ethnic slurs
 - Use profanity
- Violent or threats of violence
 - Physically try to attack you
 - Run their wheelchair into you



Tips to use with aggressive behavior

- Speak softly refrain from having a judgmental attitude
- Remain neutral
- Keep a safe distance from patient
- Try to demonstrate control of the situation without becoming demanding or authoritative
- Soothe the situation and not try to bully the patient into a better behavior



“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak
Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

Winston Churchill



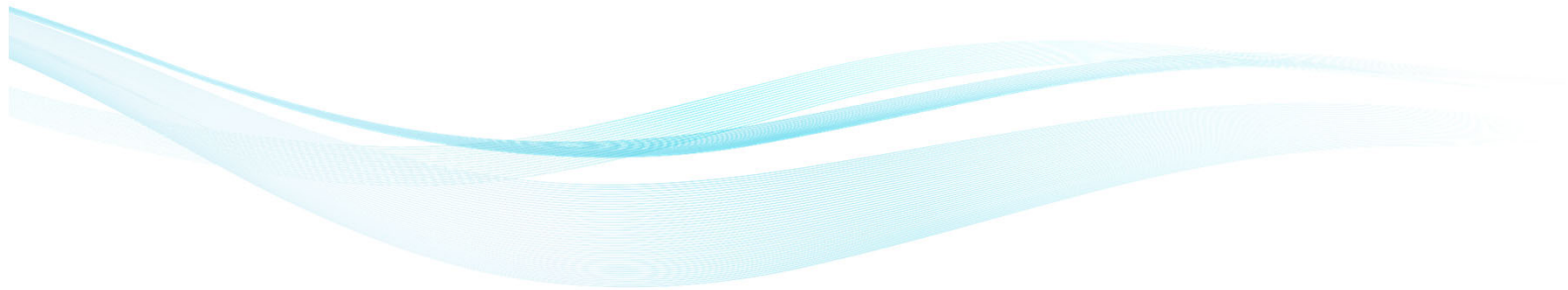
Self Care

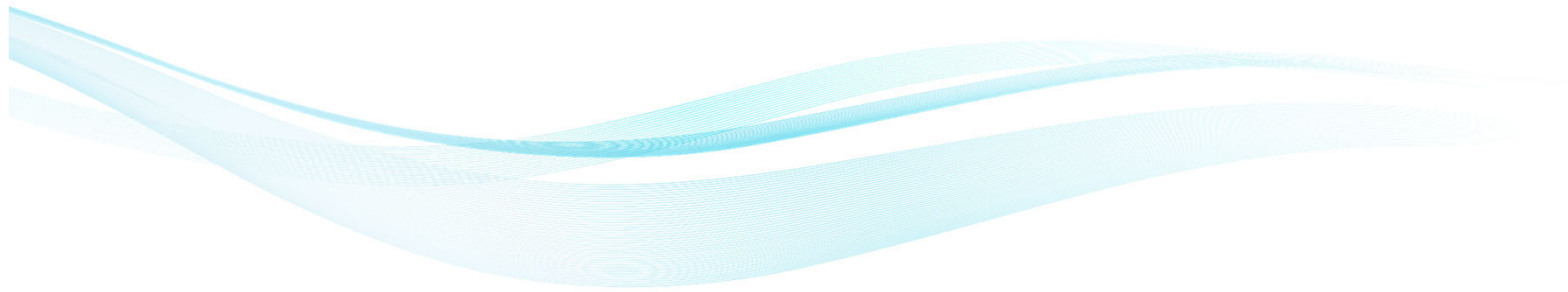
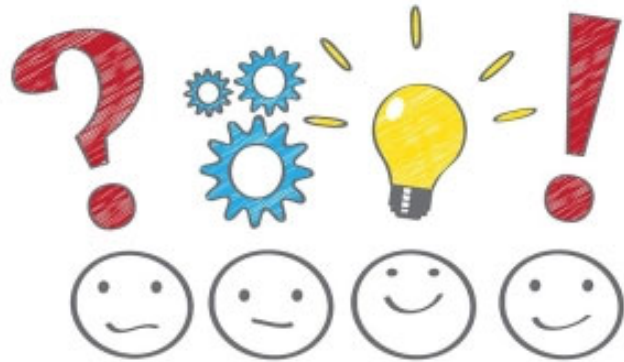
- Its important to express your feelings to a trusted supervisor
- Consider using your employee mental health services
- Your fear of an aggressive patient can affect how you care for patients that might remind you of that experience.

For example: an older male patient lashed out at you and now you worry all older males patients will be the same. This changes how you work with older men. This is not fair to your patients.



Conflict Activity





References

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