

The Primary Communication Element: Self Talk

It takes people to please people; not machines, processes or gifts. A person communicating to another person can lead to battles and war or understanding and camaraderie. **Yes, camaraderie with a frustrated patient or family does happen.** Every one of us has created it at different times. **In the past it has been haphazard, but this article** will give you one of the four on purpose capabilities to making it happen as you plan.

Why has it happened haphazardly in the past? Here are a few reasons. You yourself have been in a similar situation. (Great movie exemplifies this – “The Doctor” with John Hurt.) The person reminds you of a favorite friend or family member in looks, speech, or manner. You just came from a difficult situation that resolved nicely due to your input. (success breeds success) You have recently met that special someone and life is grand. You are in love and absolutely nothing or no one can put you in bad humor.

In all the above, when examined closely, the first ingredient to the recipe of any event, good or bad, is what is going on in your mind. **Your self communication, which is absolutely the most important part of any communication event.** It is what determines how the event will turn out. (This does not include psychotics or previously planned agendas by patient, family or friends) What are you communicating to yourself? **It is said we talk to ourselves at approximately 600-1200 words per minute.** It is mostly filled with repetitions, clichés, or self serving palaver.

The other day a 32 week pregnancy came to the ED complaining of pain related to kidney stones. First thought – why isn't Ob seeing her? Second – is she drug seeking? Third – is she in labor? It turned out that she was diagnosed with kidney stones the previous week – had the report to prove it. Her midwife could not order anything above a Lortab and the patient was in excruciating pain. All pre-conceived conclusions got trashed.

There is a strategy that avoids this embarrassment. **I use Rudyard Kipling's 6 Honest Serving Men: Who, What, Where, How, When, and sometimes why.** Always do I do this? Much more often than not. **My reinforcement is the positive outcomes I have when I do it.** It saves time. It surprises people. I actually wait for their answer. I even repeat, paraphrase back in a neutral tone what they have told me for verification. And I wait for their confirmation. Do I do it with every patient? Not the true emergency. But I do it with all the others who are emergent to themselves. This also saves me from self recrimination. Have you found that when you get ill with yourself your pre judgment has been proven wrong in a most profound way? The admitting clerk typed in rash, but in triage it's rash and a zero white count due to chemo. The eight year old fever also has leukemia. The neck ache is really two blown discs and is called Christopher Reeves' Syndrome by the neurosurgeons.

The paradigm shifts. There is major mind-altering additional information. Now you are embarrassed. Your preconceived conclusion derived from clerk talk, computer screen, or some other partially informed medium is faulty. It leads to frustration and possibly spirals further.

Short circuit this. Direct your 600-1200 words per minute. Make life easier. Be in control. Note the positive feelings you begin to have. You are a nurse, effective, directed, with a strategy.

See article 'Impact Communication Triad' for the ultimate in communication control.

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