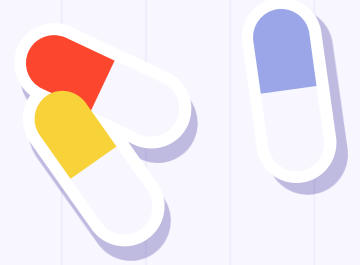


# Listening and Empathic Responding



# Overview

- **Listening** to patients is **crucial** to effective communication.
- However, empathic communication **requires more than understanding.**



# Listening Well

- An **equally critical part** of the communication process, and perhaps the **most difficult to learn**, is the ability to be a **good listener**.
- Listening well involves **understanding** both the **content** of the information being provided and the **feelings** being conveyed.
- **Skills** that are useful in effective listening include:
  1. **Summarizing**
  2. **Paraphrasing**
  3. **Empathic responding**

# 1. Summarizing

- When a **patient is providing information**, such as during a medication history interview, it is **necessary** for you to try to **summarize the critical pieces of information**.
- Summarizing **allows** you to **be sure you** understood accurately all that the patient conveyed and **allowed the patient** to add new information that may have been forgotten.
- Frequent summary statements **serve** to **identify misunderstandings** that may exist, especially when there are barriers in communication, such as language barriers.

## 2. Paraphrasing

- When using this technique, you **attempt to convey back** to the patient the essence of what he or she has **just said**.
- Paraphrasing **condenses aspects** of content as well as some superficial **recognition** of the patient's attitudes or feelings.



### 3. Empathic Responding

- Many of the **messages patients** send to you involve the way they **feel about their illnesses or life situations**.
- **If you can** communicate back to a patient that you **understand these feelings**, then a **caring, trusting relationship** can be established.
- The **main difference** between an empathic response and a paraphrase is that **empathy serves primarily as a reflection of the patient's feelings** rather than **focusing on the content** of the communication.

### 3. Empathic Responding

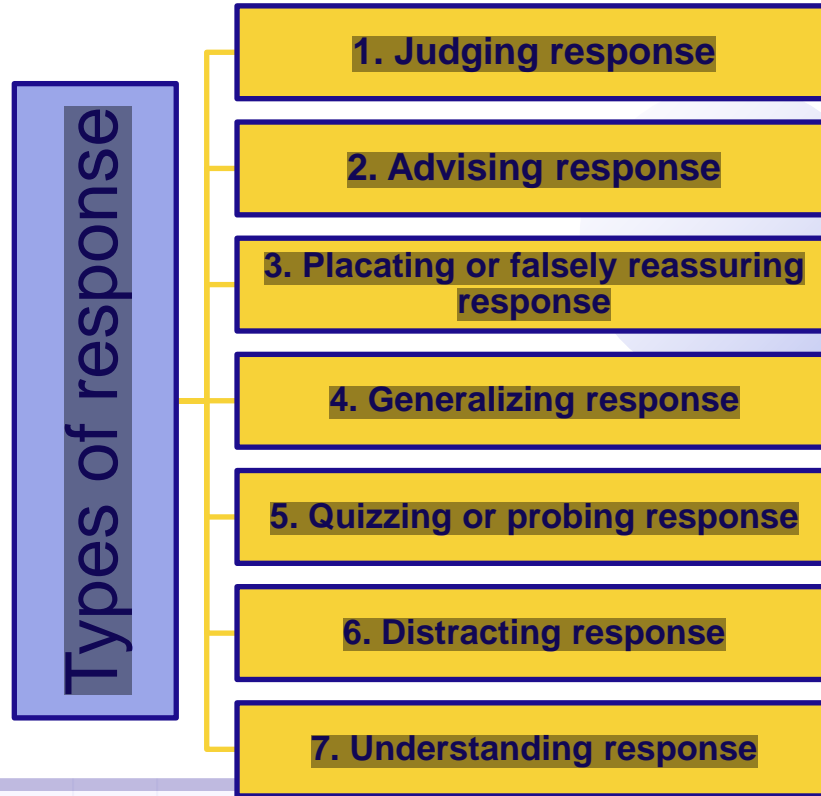
- In addition to using empathic responses, **two other attitudes or messages** must be conveyed to the patient if trust is to be established:
  1. You must be **genuine, or sincere**, in the relationship.
  2. The **respect** for and **acceptance** of the patient as an autonomous, worthwhile person.

# Positive effects of empathy on communication

- It helps **patients understand** their feelings more clearly.
- An empathic response **facilitates the patient's** problem-solving ability.
- If they are allowed to **express their feelings** in a safe atmosphere, patients may begin to **feel more** in control by understanding their feelings better.
- Patients may also **feel freer** to **explore possible solutions** or **different ways** of coping with their problems.

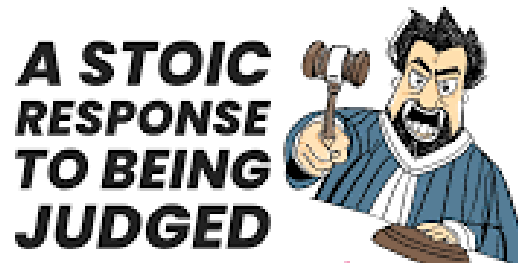


# Types of response



# 1. Judging response

- We tend to **judge or evaluate another's feelings**.
- We **tell patients** in various ways that they “**shouldn't**” feel discouraged or frustrated, that they “**shouldn't**” worry, that they “**shouldn't**” question their treatment by other health professionals.
- **Any message from you that indicates you think patients “wrong” or “bad”** or that they “**shouldn't**” feel the way they do will indicate that it is **not safe to confide in you**.



## 2. Advising response

- We also tend to **give advice**.
- We get so caught up in **our role as “expert” or “professional”** that we lose sight of the limits of our expertise.
- We must **give patients advice** on their medication regimens.
- That is **part of our professional responsibility**.

### 3. Placating or falsely reassuring

- We often **use this kind** of response to **try to get a patient to stop feeling upset** or to **try to change a patient's feelings**, rather than accepting the feelings as they exist.
- This type of response may be **used even when the patient is facing a situation of real threat**, such as a **terminal illness**.
- We may **feel helpless in such a situation** and use **false reassurance** to **protect ourselves** from the emotional involvement of listening and **trying to understand** the patient's feelings.

## 4. Generalizing response

- While it is comforting **to know** that others have had **similar experiences**.
- This response may take the **focus away from the patient experience** and **onto your own experience** before patients have had a chance to talk over their own immediate concerns.
- It also can lead you to **stop listening** because you **jump to the conclusion** that, since you have had an **experience similar to the patient's**, the patient is feeling the same way you felt.
- This may not, of course, be true.

## 5. Quizzing or probing response

- Asking questions **when the patient has expressed a feeling** can take the **focus away from the feeling** and onto the “content” of the message.

## 6. Distracting response

- Many times we **get out of situations** we **don't know how to respond** to by simply changing the subject.

# 7. Understanding response

- Only in this response is there any indication that **you truly understand** the basis of patient's concern.
- By using such a response, you **convey understanding without judging the patient** as right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable.

The background is a collage of various pharmaceutical products. It includes several blister packs containing capsules and tablets. The capsules are in various colors: orange, blue, red and white, and yellow. Some are oval-shaped, while others are round. The blister packs are made of clear plastic and are arranged in a way that they overlap each other, creating a sense of depth. The overall image conveys a message of healthcare and medicine.

**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR ATTENTION**