



## ***Basic Tips For Handling A Tough Patient (Or A Team Member)***



1. *Show respect and courtesy* no matter what your patient's attitude may be. You are the better person, the professional. Often it is the disrespect or tone of voice that gets patients/teammates upset and not the original concern.
2. Remember that usually your patient is *upset with a situation* and not with *you*. Do not take it personally unless you know you should and that you did something *yourself* to upset them.
3. *Listen with patience and don't interrupt* them – even when you may *want to* and you know you want to! It is the #1 communication complaint – being interrupted. Don't go there even though it is so easy to do so.
4. *Answer a good question with a question* – “Why do you ask? What is your concern? Are you asking for a specific reason? What do you think?” By doing this you gain a better clarification and you buy yourself some time to think about how you are going to respond. Time often is a good helper. Remember to say, “That's a very good question!” It empowers them and again gives you time to formulate a response.
5. *Apologize for the problem* and empathize with your patient's feelings. Would you be upset too “if the shoe was on the other foot?” When you apologize, hold the excuse. People don't care to hear it and it reduces the sincerity of the apology.
6. *Remain calm, confident and comfortable* avoiding arguing at all costs – do not get into the mud with them. It is like wrestling with a pig – you both get real dirty but the pig likes it. Do not respond defensively.
7. *Ask for details* in order to steer the conversation away from emotions.
8. *Be concise* – make sure you directly answer their question without “over-answering” or justifying. Give no LIP SERVICE please. You have gotten it before and you did not like it, right?
9. *Use positive language* that promotes cooperation, like “Let's see what we can do”, “I understand” or “I want this to work too”. Be empathetic - using words like “I understand”, “I would wonder the same thing”, “I would want to be really sure also” or “I wish I could . . .”
10. *Involve your patient in finding a solution* and ask them what they think would be a fair resolution. They are happy to be part of the solution. Listen to them.
11. *Take a deep breath* if you get frustrated or angry and stay committed to resolving the situation, not necessarily to *being right*. Give yourself a moment to formulate a response and do not respond defensively.
12. *Paraphrase what they said* – again, it allows you to gain further clarification and buy yourself some time in order to formulate your reply.
13. *Establish trust by keeping your word* and by doing for them what you say you will do and when you say you will do it.



Remember the great saying: *Say what you mean and mean what you say  
just don't be mean when you say it. (It works☺)*