

COMMUNICATION WITH COMPASSION

There are four key elements to making communication more meaningful:

1. **Attention:** Being aware of the signs, signals, and clues that indicate when something is important to someone.
2. **Acknowledgment:** Letting someone know that you recognize and appreciate them as a unique individual.
3. **Affection:** The human touch of warmth, comfort, humor, and kindness.
4. **Acceptance:** Allowing the situation(s) to be the way it is.

These elements can improve your communication skills, which, in turn, can help you provide financial assistance to cancer patients and their families.

ASPECTS OF ATTENTION

- Ensuring that you listen, see, and empathize.
- Asking permission to help or to assist.
- Giving choices (e.g., “*What is the most important issue that you need help you with?*”)
- Accepting the response—whether positive or negative.
- Observing the patient’s body language and gestures, such as the tone of voice or facial expressions.
- Responding to signals; following the other person’s lead.
- Recognizing what is *and* what isn’t appreciated.
- Focusing on what is “right” with a patient, rather than what is “wrong”

BARRIERS TO PAYING ATTENTION

1. Following your own agenda instead of the patient’s lead by:
 - Not asking permission.
 - Not offering choices, or a sense of control.
 - Intruding, interrupting, or controlling a conversation.
 - Getting caught up in your own feelings, opinions, and needs.
 - Focusing only on your tasks and what you are doing for the patient and avoiding being “present” with them.
2. Making assumptions by:
 - Assuming the person wants your help.
 - Never asking questions to check that you understand the patient or that the patient understands you.
 - Ignoring signals or being insensitive.
 - Never noticing and acknowledging how someone is feeling.