Cultivating Empathy and Compassion During Therapeutic Relationships

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Objectives

1. Be able to define empathy and compassion within the context of a therapeutic relationship
2. Understand and implement EBP strategies to create an empathetic and compassionate patient interaction
3. Reflect on empathetic interactions within the healthcare system
4. Explore various ways to implement compassion during a patient interaction
5. Recognize the importance of well-being for healthcare professionals
6. Practice utilizing empathy and compassion during a mock patient interaction
Disclosure

• I have no financial disclosure or conflicts of interest with the presented material in this presentation.
Self-Reflection

1. Prior to learning about empathy, how would you define empathy?
2. Prior to learning about compassion, how would you define compassion?
3. Reflect on a time when you were treated with empathy and compassion.
4. Then reflect on a time when you were treated with a lack of empathy and compassion.
5. How did you feel? What do you specifically remember about these two events?
My Why...
Point to yourself
Empathy: Step 1
What is Empathy?

• Empathy is defined as, the ability to sense, **feel**, and understand another’s emotions
• Understand the patient’s emotions
• “Get on their level”

“Empathy, the most important human attribute that matters in every aspect of life, is essential in healthcare.”

-Dr. Anna Ratka

(Patel, 2019)
Compassion: Step 2
What is Compassion?

• Compassion is defined as an **emotional response** to another’s **pain or suffering** involving an **authentic desire to help**.

• Responding to another’s pain or suffering is the essence of what it means to be human.

(Patel, 2019)
Empathy & Compassion

(Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)
The Neuroscience Behind Empathy & Compassion

(Lamm, 2011; Lown, 2016)
Why are Soft Skills Important?

• Foundational behaviors of professional practice

• The subcategory of professionalism includes:
  • advocate for the profession
  • demonstrate honesty and integrity
  • exhibit compassion and empathy
  • demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills
Healthcare Crisis

• In the US 47% of recently hospitalized patients said that they did not think the US Healthcare System generally provides compassionate care

• 46% said Healthcare professionals in general do not provide compassionate care

• A ‘hidden curriculum’ of uncaring attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by supervisors reinforce uncompassionate care norms

• 30-60% of healthcare providers experience burnout

(Lown, 2016)
Benefits of Empathy & Compassion in Healthcare

1. ↑ patient compliance (DiMatteo et al., 1993)
2. More accurate prognosis (Dubnicki, 1977)
3. ↑ patient satisfaction (Zachariae, 2003)
4. ↓ anxiety, depression and hostility in cancer patients (LaMonica, 1987)
5. Optimal physiological outcomes in diabetic patients (Hojat, 2011)
6. Improved patient adherence, satisfaction and treatment outcomes (Rattka, 2018)
7. Activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)
8. Psychological health benefits: trust building and cultivating hope (Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)
Benefits for Healthcare Providers

• Optimally healthcare providers would treat every patient with compassionate care.
  • These barriers include: burnout and occupational stress
  • To combat these barriers a focus has been placed on the need to improve healthcare provider well-being.
  • If healthcare provider well-being can be improved then researchers suggest that will result in compassionate care towards others
  • Scientific evidence to support the effects of compassion on provider well-being, employee engagement, and organizational performance

• In addition to empathy and compassion curriculum we must also teach future HCPs wellbeing strategies and self-compassion

(Boellinghaus et al., 2014; Olson & Kemper, 2014; Raab, 2014)
“Compassion” Fatigue & Burnout

• “Compassion” Fatigue → Compassion fatigue (CF) is stress resulting from exposure to a traumatized individual. CF has been described as the convergence of secondary traumatic stress (STS) and cumulative burnout (BO), a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by a depleted ability to cope with one’s everyday environment (Cocker & Joss, 2016)

• Burnout → is a long-term stress reaction marked by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of sense of personal accomplishment (Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)

• Remember, empathy hurts, but compassion heals (Trzeciak & Mazzarelli, 2019)
Self-Compassion

(Neff & Germer, 2018)
Three Good Things

• The importance of clinician well-being
• Write down three things that went well for you today and provide an explanation for why they went well

(Seligman et al., 2009)
So… Can We Teach Empathy & Compassion?

(Lown, 2016; Patel, 2019; Richardson, 2015)
Theory of Well-Being: PERMA (Seligman, 2009)
- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Achievement

Therapeutic Relationship (Muetzel, 1988)
- Partnership
- Professional Intimacy
- Reciprocity

Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1998)
- Motivation
- Self-regulation
- Adeptness in relationships

Action Phase Model of Compassion (Poulin, 2017)
- Deliberative Phase
- Implemental Phase
EBP: Empathy & Compassion Engagement

• Clinical Skills & Behaviors:
  • Sitting vs. standing during your patient interview/intake
  • Detecting patients facial expressions and nonverbal cues of emotion
    • Recognizing emotion
  • Recognizing and responding to opportunities for compassion
  • Employing non-verbal communication of caring
    • Body language, facing the patient, eye contact, tone of voice, appropriate hand/arm movements
  • Incorporating statements of support
    • Perspective taking, staying out of judgement, communication

• Be Present:
  • Assure the patient of true healthcare provider presence/focus
  • Reinforce they are not going through their current medical treatment alone

(Patel, 2019)
Soft Skills Toolbox: Empathy

• Common Reflection Format

• You feel ___________because___________.

• You feel nervous because you have a surgery tomorrow.

• You feel sad because you can’t play in your senior match

(Hodes, 2016)
Soft Skills Toolbox: Empathy

• It sounds like you feel….

• I hear you feeling….

• It looks as if you are feeling….

• I wonder if you feel….

• It seems as if you are feeling….

(Hodes, 2016)
Empathy Toolbox: Helpful Hints

- When a patient is feeling a lot of feelings….
  - Respond accurately to feelings & emotions
- Use different ways to show empathy….
  - Single words
  - Phrases
  - Experiential Statement
  - Behavioral Statement

- Give yourself time to think!
  - Use short responses
  - Distinguish between reflection of feeling and reflection of content
  - Avoid using the same stem over and over
  - Focus on the feelings in the here and now
Let’s Practice: Empathy Step 1

• 4 qualities of empathy
  • Perspective Taking
  • Staying out of judgment
  • Recognizing emotion
  • Communication

(Wiseman, 1996)
Medical Vignette #1

- The medical team was at the bedside seeing MR, a young man hospitalized with sickle cell disease admitted with a swollen knee, fever and pain. Intern, AS who had evaluated MR upon admission, was worried that the patient was depressed and was concerned about his social support system. As they left the bedside, the senior physician in charge of the team asked how the team was managing MR’s pain. **Dr. A on the team replied, “Oh, they’re all just drug-seekers.”** The senior physician said nothing in response. Intern, AS feeling unable to comment, looked back at the patient and wondered how she could help him.
1. Perspective Taking

- **Perspective taking** refers to walking in the other person’s shoes and trying to think like them.

- **Think & Reflect** (pretend you are MR):
  - If you were the patient what would you want your medical team to say about you?
  - What type of questions would you want your healthcare provider to ask?
  - How would you want your medical team to communicate to you?
Overcome the “hidden curriculum” by hearing your patients story…

• MR grew up with a chronic illness in foster care in a low SES neighborhood
• It is AS (the interns responsibility) to be able to understand MR’s perspective
• “Educational timeout”
  • Take a pause to discuss factors that would modulate empathy and compassion in this scenario
• Education alone is not enough to transform clinical practice
• Practice, Reflect, Repeat
2. Staying Out of Judgement:

• Means not making comments that infer their emotions or response was invalid or wrong
• Ex: “That’s stupid. Why did you get so upset?”
• Self-Reflect:
  • Have you ever felt judged?
  • How about in a healthcare situation?
  • How did that feel?
  • How did the way you felt impact your relationship with your HCP?
3. Recognizing Emotion: Emotion Wheel

Source unknown
4. Communication: 4 Different Ways to respond

Active and Constructive

- Enthusiastic Support
- Eye Contact
- Authentic

- Great news! I knew you’d do it. How do you feel?
- “I know this is a tough experience to go through and I want you to know that I am here with you. We are here together and will go through each treatment step together. How can I best support you along our journey?”

Passive and Constructive

- Low Energy
- Delayed Response
- Quiet

- Oh cool, that’s nice… good for you.
- This is the treatment plan that we intent to move forward with.

(Seligman, 2012)
4. Communication: 4 Different Ways to Respond

Active and Destructive 😞
- Quashing the event!
- Dismissive
- Demeaning

Passive and Destructive 😞
- Turns focus inward
- Avoiding
- Ignore Speaker

I don’t believe you! It sounds stressful.
I’ve completed this treatment on numerous patients before and it works with every compliant patient that actually wants to get better.

Huh. Well, I have a lot going on today.
You’ll be fine, I am going to check on my patient across the hall.

(Seligman, 2012)
Empathy Recap

Empathy is defined as, the ability to sense, **feel**, and understand another’s emotions

4 qualities of empathy
- Perspective Taking
- Staying out of judgment
- Recognizing emotion
- Communication
Soft Skills Toolbox: Compassion

- S – Face the Patient Squarely

- O – Adopt An Open Stance

- L – Lean to the Other

- E – Maintain Eye Contact

- R – Relax, Relax, Relax

(Hodes, 2016)
Concentration & Acknowledging

• Commit your attention to the speaker by filtering out distractions
• Acknowledge the speaker through eye contact, head nods, and facial expressions

(Hodes, 2016)
Compassion Toolbox: Research & Respond

• Asking questions to clarify and obtain information.
• Reflecting
• Rephrasing
• Paraphrasing

(Hodes, 2016)
Compassion Toolbox:
Helpful Paraphrasing Hints

• Don’t try to paraphrase everything. Pick and choose!
• Keep as short as possible. Turn attention back to patient.
• Focus on the patient, even if the patient's focus is on another person.
• Be tentative in the tone of the restatement so patients are free to say if it fits.

(Hodes, 2016)
Information Recall: Restatement Stems

- I hear you saying.....
- It sounds as though.......
- I wonder whether.......
- You’re saying that.....
- I understand that.....
- What else?

(Hodes, 2016)
Display an Authentic Desire to Help

- State the plan
- Provide options
- What matters to you the most?
- Have we addressed all of your concerns?
- Is there anything that I didn’t ask?

(Harriell, 2020)
Let’s Practice Compassionate Care: Step 2

- Build a trusting relationship
- Cultivate hope
Medical Vignette #2

As an AT you’ve been treating a W Golf Athlete for 2 years. She has been px dx with a finger fx and TOS. She had a negative experience with her TOS diagnosis- a lot of negative images, no direct answers, conservative rehabilitation was moderately successful. This year she falls on the golf course and injures her hip. She has a fear of seeing the MD because of her px experience. She says, “I don’t want to see the doctor, I am fearful that again they will not have answers and all of my images will be negative.”

How do you respond with empathy and compassion towards your patient?
Debriefing/Feedback/Growth

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all successfully and 10 is very successfully, how successfully did your doctor:

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<td>Express sensitivity, caring and compassion for your situation</td>
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<td>Strive to understand your emotional needs</td>
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<td>Consider the effect of your illnesses on you and your family</td>
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<td>Listen attentively to you</td>
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<td>Convey information in a way that is understandable</td>
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<td>Gain your trust</td>
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<td>Involve you in decisions about your treatment</td>
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<td>Comfortably discuss sensitive, emotional or psychological issues</td>
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<td>Treat you as a person not just as a disease</td>
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<td>Show respect for you and your family</td>
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<td>Communicate test results in a timely and sensitive manner</td>
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<td>Spend enough time with you</td>
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(Lown et al., 2015)
Compassion Recap

• Compassion is defined as an **emotional response** to another’s **pain or suffering** involving an **authentic desire to help**.

• Asking questions to clarify and obtain information.
• Reflecting
• Rephrasing
• Paraphrasing
• Provide your patient with a trusting relationship, hope, and an authentic desire to help
Self-Reflect

• Describe how this exercise went for you.
• What went well?
• What are you looking to improve upon during future patient interactions?
• What was your take home message?
Additional Resources for Cultivating Empathy & Compassion During Therapeutic Relationships


Cleveland Clinic. (2013, February 27). *Empathy: The human connection to patient care* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDDWvj_q-o8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDDWvj_q-o8)


Harriell, K. [University of Miami]. (2020, June 29). ‘*Cane talks: Ask the right questions- What athletic trainers can teach us about healthcare.*’ [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnDeNGXeQHM&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnDeNGXeQHM&feature=emb_logo)


References


Thank you!