**Create a partnership between yourself and the patient/surrogate by utilizing key principals and communication skills:**

* ***Collaboration:*** Create a safe, open *environment*. The patient chooses*when, where, and who* is involved in the conversation. The conversation moves at a pace that is *comfortable for the patient*.
* ***Autonomy*:** *Believe* in the patient’s ability to make difficult decisions.
* ***Evocation:*** Allow the patient to discover *their own understanding* through their experiences, thoughts and emotions.
* ***Remove all bias:*** Recognize that the patient’s values, goals, and preferences may be different than yours.

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| **Key Skills AND Sample Statements** | | | | | | |
| **Affirmation**  Acknowledging patient’s strengths and abilities | **Reflection** | | | **Exploring**  Encouraging patient exploration | | **“I wish”**  Aligning with the patient’s experience |
| **Simple**  Restate or rephrase what patient says | | **Complex**  Interpretation such as naming feelings |
| *You are such a (strong, committed, caring) person.* | *This is really important to you.* | | *You can’t imagine discussing this with your son, but at the same time you’re worried about how this could affect him later.* | *What do you mean when you say I don’t want to give up (be a vegetable/ a burden/ on life support)?* | | *I, too, hope that \_\_\_\_\_ happens.* |
| *You (or your dad, mom, child, spouse) are such a strong person, and have been through so much.* | *You just aren’t ready to discuss this yet.* | | *One of the hardest things for you is all the uncertainty. On one hand,\_\_\_\_, and on the other,\_\_\_\_.* | *What else?* | | *I wish things weren’t so stressful for your family.* |
| *This is very difficult to think about, and yet you are still willing to talk to me about it.* | *So \_\_\_\_\_ has been the most difficult symptom for you to deal with.* | | *This sounds frustrating (scary, overwhelming, difficult, challenging, hard).* | *Tell me more…* | | *I wish the situation were different.* |
| *You have done so much to try to manage your illness (help your loved one with their illness).* | *Dealing with this illness has been such a big part of your life and has taken so much energy.* | | *Other people in your situation have told me this feels very (name emotion).* | *Tell me more about what [a miracle, fighting, not giving up, etc.] might look like for you.* | | *I hope for a miracle, too.* |
| **Sample Responses to challenging Statements/questions**  These statements are examples of empathic continuers. Patients may not immediately respond to your first empathic statement. It often takes multiple successive empathic responses to help patients work through strong emotion. | | | | | | |
| **God’s going to bring me a miracle.**   * I too hope that a miracle happens. (**Remember no buts**!) **(“I wish”)** * You have such a strong faith. (**affirmation**) * Having faith is very important to you. (**reflection**) * Can you share with me what a miracle might look like for you? (**exploring**) | | **My dad is a fighter!**   * He is. He is such a strong person and he has been through so much. (**affirmation**) * You care about your dad so much. (**affirmation**) * It must be so (**name emotion**) to see him so sick. (**reflection**) * Tell me more about your dad and what matters most to him. (**exploring**) | | | **Do you know something I don’t know?**   * Tell me more about what you are asking. (**exploring**) * You seem worried. **(reflection)** * You are wondering if there is something your doctors haven’t told you. **(reflection)** * What is your understanding of where things are at with your health? **(open ended)** * This situation must be very **(name emotion). (reflection)** | |
| **Why are we talking about this now?**   * You seem worried/overwhelmed/ scared. **(reflection)** * Maybe you aren’t ready to discuss this right now. **(reflection)** * That’s ok if you don’t want to discuss this right now. **(affirmation)** * You don’t think this is a good time to discuss this. Tell me more about what the right time would look like. (**exploring**) | | **Are you giving up on me?**   * It sounds like you might be feeling…. (**name emotion)**   + Alone   + Scared   + Etc. * We will go through this together. (**affirmation**) * No – I want to make sure we get you the best care possible to take care of what’s going on for you now. | | | **Are you telling me my dad is dying?**  **These responses will affirm the question empathically – so do not use them if the patient is not dying**   * I wish the situation were different.   **(“I wish”)**   * This must be such a shock for you. (**reflection**) * I can’t even imagine how difficult this must be. (**reflection**) | |

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| **Setting:** Outpatient Clinic  **Clinician:** You are meeting with a patient who is at the clinic to see their provider following a recent hospitalization. The patient has been in the hospital multiple times this year for COPD exacerbations. A goals of care conversation would be helpful and you want to introduce the topic.  **Patient:** You have been in the hospital multiple times this year for breathing difficulty related to COPD. You were recently discharged from the hospital. You are frustrated because you missed your granddaughter’s birthday party. | | |
| **Communication Skill** | graphic of a clinician wearing a stethoscope  **Clinican** | outline of a male patient's head and shoulders **Patient** |
| Open-ended question | “Tell me about how things have been going with your health recently.” | Ok, I guess. I just got out of the hospital, you know. I went to the ER for some medications, and they made me stay 5 days. They didn’t do anything to help! |
| Name the emotion | You seem really frustrated about your experience in the hospital. | I am! |
| Exploring | Tell me more about what’s frustrating. | [Improvise.] |
| Reflection | [Make a reflection based on what the patient is telling you, e.g., “Family is really important to your quality of life.” or “This can feel pretty overwhelming at times.”] | [Improvise.] |
| Open-ended question | What have you discussed with your doctor about what you want for medical care, such as coming into the hospital? | Not much, I guess. I really don’t like coming to the hospital. It’s such a hassle for everyone, especially my family, they have to drive a long way to visit me.  It does make me feel better, though. |
| Affirmation | You have been through a lot in order to try to manage your breathing. | I suppose I have. My family, too. |
| Offer Goals of Care Conversation | I am wondering- would it be helpful to talk more about what’s important to you and your preferences for managing your medical care going forward, given your lung problems? | Yeah, I think it would help. |
|  | Ok. Let’s set up an appointment. |  |