

COMMUNICATION VITAL SIGNS

Tips for being a better communicator.

Before you meet with a patient, family, your boss or a colleague, check in with yourself. Are you using these essential skills for effective communication?

USE EYE CONTACT.

Staring directly into someone's eyes for too long can come across as too aggressive or intimidating. Instead, alternate between looking into someone's eyes briefly or at the area two centimeters around their eyes about 30% of the time.¹ Don't forget to blink!

LISTEN CAREFULLY.

Effective communication is a two-way street. As a good listener, you're not just passively hearing the words being spoken to you. You're actively thinking about what those words mean. Asking follow-up questions or adding to the conversation shows you're making an effort to understand.²

SPEAK CLEARLY.

Communicating with clarity whenever possible helps squash the possibility of a misunderstanding. First, consider your audience, and adjust your communication style accordingly. Be as direct as you can, and try to avoid jargon.³

EXPRESS EMPATHY.

In order to make a genuine connection, it's important to keep in mind how other people are experiencing a situation. A regular day at work for you may be a confusing day for a patient. Try to verbally validate their feelings and match their energy level to show them that you care.⁴

SOURCE:

1 <http://www.thelanguagelab.ca/posts/nonverbal-communication-the-importance-of-eye-contact/>

2 <https://hbr.org/2016/07/what-great-listeners-actually-do>

3 <http://www.managingamericans.com/BlogFeed/Communication-Skills/7-Tips-for-Communicating-with-Clarity.htm>

4 <https://www.improveyoursocialskills.com/empathy/understanding-others>

Fusion

ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

How to communicate with patients of all ages.

No matter how old or young your patients typically are, each age group has unique needs when it comes to effective communication. Try these tips to tailor your speech.



Children

- Be honest.
- Speak in simple terms.
- Be a source of comfort.



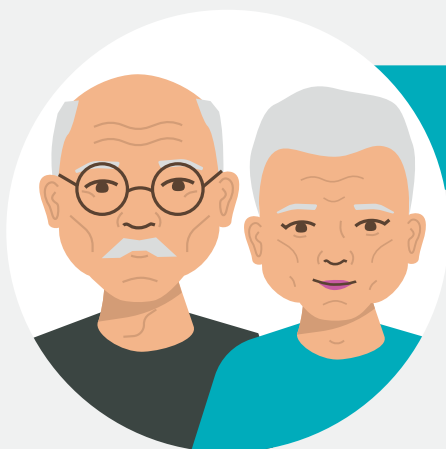
Parents

- Lead with empathy.
- Do your best to stay calm.
- Anticipate questions.



Families

- Set boundaries.
- Don't take things personally.
- Maintain patient confidentiality.



Seniors

- Respect their intelligence.
- Take things slow.
- Be their advocate.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON?

Find out about your patient in five minutes.

Healthcare moves fast, but you can still communicate effectively. The BATHE method created by Marian R. Stuart, Ph.D., uses open-ended discussion to quickly determine connections between a patient's emotional and physical well-being.



Background

"What's going on in your life?"

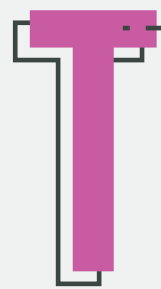
This helps you understand the context for a patient's visit.



Affect

"How do you feel about that?"

This helps the patient name their emotions or mood.



Trouble

"What about the situation troubles you the most?"

This helps you decide where to begin or focus.



Handling

"How are you handling that?"

This helps you see connections between their mind and body.



Empathy

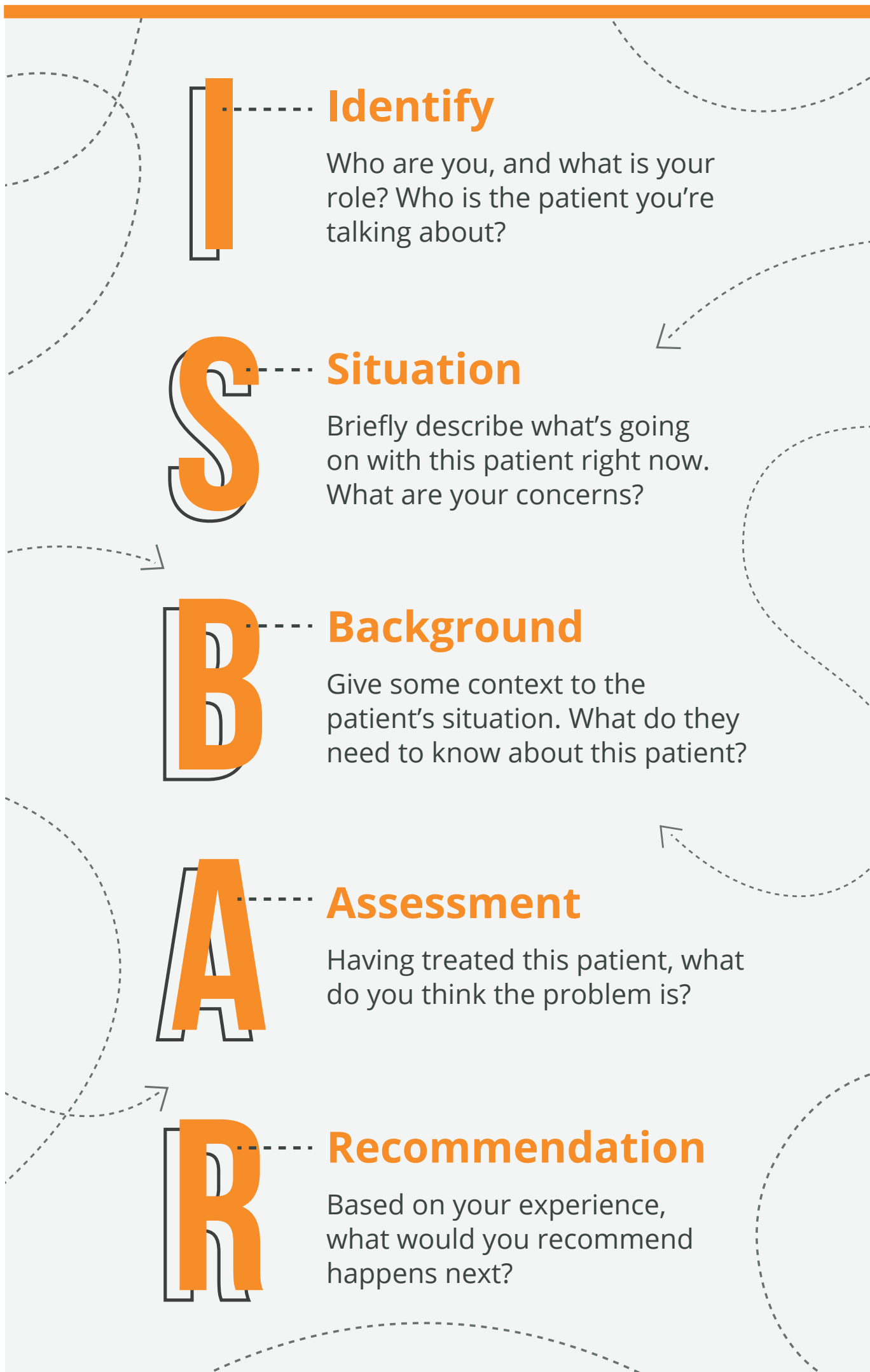
"That must be very difficult for you."

This legitimizes the patient's feelings and offers support.

THE SHIFT CHANGE SHORTCUT

Explain patient situations accurately and quickly.

The mnemonic ISBAR is adapted from a communication method followed by the U.S. Navy to communicate in high-risk environments. In healthcare, it can be used to transfer information safely from one nurse or physician to another between shifts. Here's how it's done.



Fusion

STAYING SMART WITH TECHNOLOGY

Making electronic communications effective and secure.

Healthcare is changing, and while face-to-face communication is still vital, much of our internal communication is done electronically. Follow these tips to make sure you keep patient information safe and keep communication flowing across teams.

1. **Maintain professionalism** in all written electronic communications.

2. **Take detailed notes** of patient treatments for others to reference.

3. If there's potential for miscommunication, **talk offline instead.**

4. When communicating with patients, **use medical jargon wisely.**

5. **Protect patient information** by never sharing login information.

Fusion