

24th September 2024
Relationship Building – A4 – Showing Empathy

Think about the following questions:

1. What is empathy and how do we show it?
2. Are there different levels of empathy?
3. Why is empathy important in conversations with patients?

From the OET Speaking Assessment Criteria Glossary...

A4	Showing empathy for feelings/predicament/emotional state	Empathy is one of the key skills of building the relationship. Empathy involves the understanding and sensitive appreciation of another person's predicament or feelings and the communication of that understanding back to the patient in a supportive way. This can be achieved through both non-verbal and verbal behaviours. Even with audio alone, some non-verbal behaviours such as the use of silence and appropriate voice tone in response to a patient's expression of feelings can be observed. Verbal empathy makes this more explicit by specifically naming and appreciating the patient's emotions or predicament.
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“...by specifically naming and appreciating the patient’s emotions or predicament.”

Patient says...	Medical professional says...
“I’m feeling really tired at the moment.”	“I’m sorry to hear that you are feeling tired” “That must be exhausting/tiring/frustrating”
“I’m really worried about this pain in my back.”	“I totally understand that you feel concerned” “I can imagine it’s concerning”
“I lost my dad recently and I haven’t been feeling positive since.”	“I’m so so sorry to hear about your dad” “My condolences for your loss” “It sounds really upsetting”

Patient says...	Medical professional says...
<p>"I have a terrible cold at the moment."</p>	<p>"I'm sorry to hear you are feeling unwell"</p> <p>"I can understand it must be challenging to cope with this cold"</p> <p>"I understand how frustrating this must be for you"</p>
<p>"I'm really concerned about this lump on my arm."</p>	<p>"I understand that having this lump must be really difficult for you"</p> <p>"I can understand the level of worry/concern ("distress" = very strong concern) the lump is causing"</p> <p>"I can imagine how uncomfortable the lump must make you feel"</p>
<p>"My partner died recently and I haven't been able to do anything 'normal' for weeks."</p>	<p>"My condolences for your loss"</p> <p>"I am sad to hear that you have experienced the loss of your partner"</p> <p>"I'm so/really sorry to hear about your partner"</p> <p>"My deepest sympathy for the loss of you partner"</p>