Key Communication Skills for Patient and Family Advisors: Enable Your Voice to Be Heard!
Presented by Jill Golde, Partner, Language of Caring
Defining Patient Experience

The sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization’s culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.

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Become a Certified Patient Experience Professional.

Applicants should have a minimum 3 years of professional experience in a patient experience related role or completion of 30 Patient Experience Continuing Education Credits (PXEs).

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• All participant phone lines are muted.
• The presentation will run 45-50 minutes with about 10-15 min for Q&A.
• Q&A will be conducted through the Q&A function. Please submit questions to the host for a facilitated Q&A after the presentation.
• Webinar materials and session recording will be available for all attendees. (receive an email notification with the appropriate link)
• A survey will be distributed following today’s session.
• This program is pending approval for 1 PXE
PX Continuing Education Credits

- In order to obtain patient experience continuing education credit, participants must attend the program in its entirety and return the completed evaluation.

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- No off label use of products will be addressed during this educational activity.

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Key Communication Skills for Patient and Family Advisors:
Enable Your Voice to Be Heard!

Jill Golde, MS
Partner, Language of Caring, LLC

www.languageofcaring.com
jgolde@languageofcaring.com
314-571-9607
Are you an advisor or do you work with advisors?

- If you’re an advisor, this is for you.
- If you work with advisors, this is information that can help you train and coach advisors.
You are a GIFT to health care!

• You have firsthand experience and credibility.
• You have a voice that deserves to be heard.
• You have the power to influence positive change.
You fulfill MANY important roles!

- Advisory councils and hospital committees
- Teaching staff and physicians
- Designing, implementing, and evaluating health care programs
- Policy review
- Interviewing candidates (e.g. for residencies)
- Developing/improving educational materials
- Contributing to discussion groups focused on a particular department or service
- ...and much more
The Nature of Giving Feedback
All of your roles require COMMUNICATION.

To maximize your contribution, you need to be a super-effective communicator.

- Comfortable speaking in a group with candor
- Able to use your personal experience constructively
- Able to listen and hear differing opinions
- Able to give feedback in a way that will be heard
Webinar Objective

Identify concrete communication skills for:

- Expressing your views
- Making suggestions
- Providing support, and
- Pushing for improvement

...In a way that:

- Opens minds and reduces resistance
- Increases your positive impact
Agenda

1. Your communication challenges
2. The Language of Caring: Skills that encourage trust and openness when you express yourself
3. How to deal with tough situations
4. The power of your stories and how to use them with impact
1. Your Communication Challenges

*Some leaders and clinicians want to hear your voice. Others say they do, but might not.*

I’m already in tune with what patients and families think and feel.

I don’t have time. What’s your point?!?

I’m a professional. I know best.

We need your feedback (but we don’t really want it.)

We’ve always done it this way.
The Solution

• Expect some resistance and react lovingly.
• Communicate with empathy and care.
• You will open minds and hearts.
2. Communicate with empathy and care...with the *Language of Caring*

Skills that encourage trust and openness when you express yourself
Why focus on communicating with CARING?

With staff
- We open minds and reduce defensiveness
- We show we’re on their side.
- We earn trust and partnership.
- They mean well; it’s the right thing to do.

With families
- We reduce anxiety and stress. They feel less alone.
- We foster openness and trust.
- They can better absorb what we’re saying.
- It’s the right thing to do!
You’re probably thinking: “But I’m already caring!”

• Absolutely, that’s a given.
• The question is: Are you communicating your caring?
• When you speak your mind as Advisor, do staff and families feel your caring?
Language of Caring Model: Heart-Head-Heart®
Situation: Caregiver to Family Advisor
“YOU are a reasonable parent. But SOME parents are sooo difficult!”

What is your first response?
Situation: Administrator to Advisor
“You don’t realize the complexity of what we deal with every day.”

What is your first response?
Two Kinds of Communication

Heart
- Emotion, Caring, Empathy

Head
- Tasks, Information, Analysis, Explaining, Fixing, Plans
Both 🧠 and ❤ have benefits!

When we speak from the HEART:
• People feel respected, cared for, and understood.
• They can hear our ideas (the HEAD part) much better.

When we speak from the HEAD:
• People get valuable information.
• They appreciate answers and solutions.
These days…

• Busy-ness and pressure make many of us very task-oriented. Some leaders will push you to get to the point!
• The result: You’re more likely to communicate from your HEAD, and less from your HEART
• Then, people may view your message as impersonal or even uncaring.
Now, let's look at our responses to the situations given earlier.
Situation: Caregiver to Family Advisor

“YOU are a reasonable parent. But SOME parents are sooo difficult!”

**HEAD Responses**
- “Yes, but they’re going through a lot and they’re upset.”
- “What happened? Are you thinking about a particular situation?”
- “I can suggest some ways you could handle tough situations with parents.”

**HEART Responses**
- “I know you care so much about kids and do everything possible for them.”
- “It must be very hard for you—dealing with parents who are distressed or angry.”
- “I’d like to help you in the tough situations you face.”
Situation: Administrator to Advisor
“You don’t realize the complexity of what we deal with every day.”

HEAD Responses
• “What have you heard me say that sounds oversimplifying?”
• “I’ve been around a long time and I think I see many of the complexities.”
• “Where is my thinking off-base?”

HEART Responses
• “I know you’re very committed to improving the patient experience and I want to help.
• “I respect your experience and trust your judgment about what can work.”
• “Sounds like your realities are really challenging. Still I’m asking you to consider this....”

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The Ideal: Heart-Head-Heart® Sandwich

Caregiver to Family Advisor

“YOU are a reasonable parent. But SOME parents are sooo difficult!”

“It must be very hard for you—dealing with parents who are distressed or angry.”

“What happened? Are you thinking about a particular situation?”

“I’d like to help you in the tough situations you face.”
Administrator to Advisor:

“‘You don’t realize the complexity of what we deal with every day.’

“I know you’re very committed to improving the patient experience and I want to help.

“I’m interested in your reaction to this idea…. ”

I respect your experience and trust your judgment about what can work.”
Language of Caring:
‘Heart’ Skills That Help You Serve as an Effective Advisor

1. The Practice of Presence
2. The Gift of Appreciation
3. Explaining Positive Intent
4. Acknowledging Feelings
5. The Blameless Apology
6. Say it again with HEART!

...gleaned from extensive study of best practices
Language of Caring Skill: The Practice of Presence

If you think about what you’re going to say next, you’ll miss what others are saying and feeling.

- Quiet your racing mind.
- Focus your whole self on the other people. Give your undivided, respectful attention.
- Listen with an open mind and heart.
Language of Caring Skill: The Gift of Appreciation and Positive Regard

• Thanks
• Appreciation
• A compliment
• Admiration

……especially critical for advisors who want to be influential and heard!
Appreciation and positive regard open minds!

| “I know you want to do what’s best for your patients.” |
| “I realize that you meant well and didn’t intend to create the result you got.” |
| “I admire your compassion.” |
| “I really respect your determination to support this family through their health trauma.” |
Language of Caring Skill: Explaining Positive Intent

A CRITICAL Skill for Advisors!

Tell the person how what you are doing or suggesting is for their sake. EXPRESS your good intentions and they’ll be less quick to judge.
**Caution: No BUTS about it!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Deprecation</th>
<th>Positive Intent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to be a nuisance but..”</td>
<td>“I want to help…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to tell you what to do, but.”</td>
<td>“I want to help and I have a suggestion.”</td>
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**Use positive intent instead of self-deprecation.**
START with your positive intent. THEN, express your opinion, observation or suggestion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Positive Intent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You strongly disagree with what an executive is saying.</td>
<td>“I want to make sure we consider every angle…. ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You want to give someone feedback that they probably won’t like hearing.</td>
<td>“I’d like to help you be even more effective in making patients feel welcome.”</td>
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Especially Powerful: Combine Appreciation with Positive Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Appreciation + Positive intent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re on an advisory team. The executives are about to make a decision that you think will have a negative effect on patients.</td>
<td>“I know you want what’s best for patients. I want to share another approach that might work better for patients.”</td>
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Language of Caring Skill: Acknowledging Feelings

Use words to reflect back the feelings you think the other person may be having. Use an accepting, inquiring tone.

• “You sound upset.”
• “You look puzzled.”
• “You seem upset by what I’m saying.”
• “I imagine this must be quite a relief for you.”

People feel understood when we show regard for their feelings, not just for the content of what they say.
Language of Caring Skill: The Blameless Apology

• Show sincere regret that a person is somehow suffering or having a frustrating time—without placing blame or blaming others.

• Magic Words: “I’m sorry.”
### Blameless Apology

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Blameless Apology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your very good suggestion requires a lot of work to implement.</td>
<td>“I’m sorry it takes so much effort to make this happen.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Another member of the team says, “You don’t understand!”</td>
<td>“I’m sorry if I’m not getting it. Please say more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A manager complains to you about another manager.</td>
<td>“I’m sorry it feels like you can’t rely on him.”</td>
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Language of Caring:
‘Heart’ Skills That Make Your Caring Felt

1. The Practice of Presence
2. The Gift of Appreciation
3. Explaining Positive Intent
4. Acknowledging Feelings
5. The Blameless Apology
6. Say it again with HEART!

…gleaned from extensive study of best practices
About Using the Language of Caring Skills

Darlene Barkman, Family Advisor
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
3. Preventing and Handling Tough Situations
Prevent tough situations with respectful language.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tip</th>
<th>Sample Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sure you understand.</td>
<td>“Just so I’m clear on this..”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Let me make sure I understood. I heard you say…”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m not sure I know what HCAHPS means. Would you please explain?”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Would you walk me through that, so I can picture it?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe your views as perceptions or</td>
<td>“From my experience..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opinions, not facts or truths.</td>
<td>“We found it worked well for our family when..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My initial reaction is…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the “soft startup.”</td>
<td>“I appreciate that you’re..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I find it makes a difference when…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“For me/us..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer suggestions.</td>
<td>“For me/us, it would be helpful if..”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The first idea I had was..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Something I might consider is..”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree gently.</td>
<td>“I see it differently.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That doesn’t work so well for me.”</td>
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</table>
Language of Caring Skill: Say it again with HEART!

- If your message is met with resistance or defensiveness, inquire and address the issue if you can.
- If the person remains resistant or defensive, use “Say it again with HEART.”

Repeat your main message

... with lots of caring.
Say it again with HEART: An Example

- Administrator: You’re right that there is no privacy for patients in that area. But it would cost us way too much to fix that.
- Advisor:
  - Heart: I realize it could be expensive and I’m sorry about it. And, I know that you do care about patients’ experiences and perceptions.
  - Bottom line message: I feel strongly that the organization needs to look into ways to provide privacy to patients there.
- Administrator: Well, we can put it on the agenda for some time in the future, and meanwhile, we’ll do the best we can.
- Advisor:
  - Heart (Positive Intent): I want patients to have the privacy they deserve…it matters to them and to the organization.
  - Bottom line message: And I feel strongly that this should be a priority.
What happens if you have a strong emotional response to the discussion?

- **Reframe**: Notice that you’re having a strong reaction. *Then, get to neutral.* E.g. “This is interesting. I’m having a big reaction to this.”
- **Re-center yourself**
- **Remind yourself** that a flood of feelings is okay, in fact very common.
- **Take a few slow breaths.**
- **Sit back and Just listen a bit.**
- **Speak when you’re ready**—if you want to.
Not every conversation or discussion will go well!

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<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>How This Might Sound</th>
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| Acknowledge this using the Language of Caring                          | • “I wish I could have been more helpful.”  
• “I’m sorry this made you uncomfortable.”  
• Whether you agree or not, I know your heart’s in the right place and I appreciate your hearing me out. |
| In your own **mind**, choose “self-talk” that respects your effort and intent. | • “You win some; you lose some!”  
• “I tried my best.”  
• “I expressed myself honestly, and that’s good, regardless of the outcome.” |
When you’ve gone as far as you can go, say so with Heart-Head-Heart®.

- **Heart:** “I so wish I could make things easier for you.
- **Head:** “I think we’ve gone as far as we can go.”
- **Heart:** “I admire your courage and wish you the best..”
4. The Power of Your Stories

• Advice is more powerful when grounded in your personal experience.
• Stories work because they’re personal.
• Images and emotions stick with people in ways that abstract ideas and data don’t.
• In coaching staff and physicians, by using examples, people connect to you better.
Because stories are a powerful way to change behavior, it’s important to become EFFECTIVE with your stories.

Advisors are often asked to talk with nurses about their patient experiences.

And this often changes behavior!
The Power of Your Story

Amy Kratchman
Family Advisor; Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
Example: Advisor on Committee Reviewing Educational Materials

“Your biopsy is negative.”
Telling a good story is an art: Tips for Telling Your Stories (so others listen with an open mind)

• **Temptation:** To tell too many details, because all of it matters to you.

• **The danger:** You’ll lose your listeners.

*When telling stories in meetings: Less is more.*

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<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>So What?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Now What?</strong></td>
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</table>
Example: Parent of teen with special needs during meeting

The Question: “What matters to kids and their parents?”

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong> Situation Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>We came in for a routine check-back appointment. The doctor greeted me with a handshake, turned to my 13 year old and began talking. He never turned back to me that whole appointment. It was all between my son and the doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>So What?</strong> The Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we left the office, my son turned to me and said, “You know, Mom, I think that’s the best doctor’s appointment I’ve ever had.” I agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Now What?</strong> Conclusion or Suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s so important to talk to the child, not to the parent.</td>
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</table>
More Tips on Sharing Stories

• If you’re telling someone else’s story, make that clear.
• Focus on experiences, not individuals. Don’t mention names.
• If you want to tell a story that brings up strong emotions, prepare---with the help of your staff liaison or another advisor.
• If you or others get emotional, that’s fine.
Recap

1. Your communication challenges
2. The Language of Caring: Skills that encourage trust and openness when you express yourself
3. Preventing and handling tough situations
4. The power of your stories and how to use them with impact
Ending with a Heart-Head-Heart® Message for YOU!
Questions & Comments, please!

jgolde@languageofcaring.com
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We invite you to join our global community of over 40,000 members and guests passionate about improving the patient experience.

Become a member today at www.theberylinstitute.org
Thank you for participating!

Please look for a post- webinar evaluation coming soon...

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