



# Empathetic Telemedicine:

*Strategies for building rapport and  
reassuring patient by video*

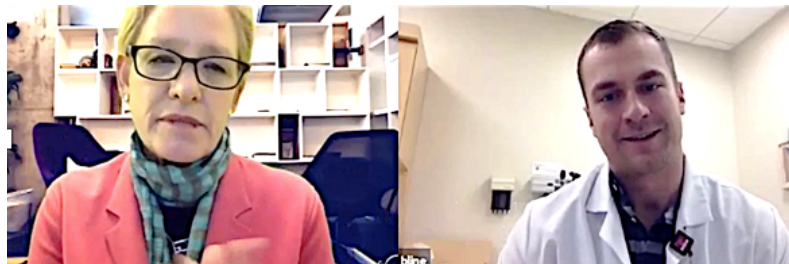
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# Learning Objectives

- List two methods to establish trust and a reassuring presence at the beginning of a visit
- Describe how to assess and explore emotional cues in a challenging encounter
- Show empathy through non-verbal communication (body language)
- Explain key actions to provide closure

# Invest in the beginning

- Be intentional: opportunity to make a positive first impression
- Professionalism
  - Attire (include badge), background
  - Self-introduction and role on team
- Empathy
  - Non-verbal cues
    - Eye contact— with camera, use generously at the beginning
    - Tone of voice—slow down to portray that you are not rushed
    - Posture/expressions—reflect attentiveness and warmth, smile!
  - “Small talk before big talk”: invest in connecting momentarily
- Technology: set up ahead of time, help patient navigate



# Assessing emotions and comforting patients verbally

- Narrate your behavior: verbalize off-screen activities  
*"I'm listening carefully and will be taking a few notes as we talk."*
- If you are having difficulty reading the patient's expressions, ask directly  
*"How are you feeling about the diagnosis?"*
- Name the emotion so there is no misunderstanding  
*"You sound worried."*
- Acknowledge video as a barrier  
*"It's harder to do this by video but I want you to know I am here for you."*
- Verbalize what you would do in person  
*"I wish I were there to give you a tissue or hold your hand."*



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# Assessing emotions and comforting patients verbally



- Use empathetic statements  
*"I would feel frustrated also."*
- Validate patient's feelings  
*"It is normal to feel scared."*
- Show appreciation  
*"This must be a difficult topic to discuss. Thank you for trusting me."*
- Verbalize support  
*"I want to let you know that you can always contact me. I am here to support you through your treatment."*

# More ways to convey empathy with non-verbal cues

## Do:

- Sustain eye contact (with the camera)
- Show undivided attention by stopping all other activities
- Lean in
- Use purposeful facial expressions (smiling, widening eyes, lifting eyebrows)
- Place hand on heart or cheek for moments of empathy
- Use a pause or moment of silence to provide space

## Avoid:

- Absentminded movements (looking away to type or fidgeting), which can appear distracted/uncaring
- Excess hand motions or crossing arms which can be distracting or seem disapproving



# Provide Closure

- Transition to wrap up:
  - *"We have a few minutes left and I would like to summarize our plan"*
- Summarize discussion and next steps
- Incorporate the patient's concerns:
  - *"I know you are worried about your daughter's health; it seems that like you are doing everything you can to support her. Self-care is important to support others."*
- Where can they find their visit notes or resources?
- When do they see you next?
  - *"If your symptoms don't worsen, let's plan to check-in at 6 weeks."*
- Provide closure:

*"I'm so glad we had a chance to connect today. Please keep me posted of any changes."*



# Thank you

Please contact us for any questions or comments:

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