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"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"
~ Theodore Roosevelt

The Universal Upset Patient Protocol (UUPP)

A single encounter with an upset person can ruin your whole day and leave you ruminating on what you might have done differently for weeks. Here is a simple script to take the stress and confusion out of dealing with upset people in any area of your life.

You have probably not been taught how to deal with upset people effectively -- so when you find yourself faced with an upset person you most likely do one of the two things that will make it worse

- Defend yourself or the person who upset them
- Try to "solve their problem"

These are natural human instincts, and they NEVER WORK.

Here is a COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL that gives you a simple, structured series of questions and phrases to deal with the upset person quickly, easily, empathetically and with elegance and grace.

The Key is “FEELINGS FIRST”

In any conversation with an upset person, they need to express their feelings first -- before you will be able to discuss anything else. They are longing to be heard and understood, for someone to care about their situation.

- Our job is to give them an opportunity to do that right up front ... just as soon as we realize they are upset.
- THEN we empathize and come to an agreement on what to do next.

It is so easy to react to their upset, get defensive and try to solve it right away.

Or try your best to ignore it, pretend it is not happening and pray they will move on.

If you choose either of these options, it is literally like pouring gasoline on a fire. You will end up with hurt feelings, LONG delays and sometimes lingering resentment that can permanently color your relationship with this person going forward.

You may also doubt your skills or your choice of career when you recognize you have failed (again) in this difficult interaction.

Let me show you a six-step conversation that will make a big difference for you from now on.

When you use the UUPP - you will be pleasantly surprised at how quickly the upset person calms down and how easy it is for you to hold your center. These may turn out to be your favorite conversations from now on because it is so simple to help the patient feel so much better.

[CLICK HERE for the UUPP Video Training](#)

The Universal Upset Patient Protocol

BEFORE WE BEGIN: MAKE SURE YOU ARE SAFE

Take a second to assess the situation. Trust your gut as you ask yourself, "is this person actually dangerous?" Violence in health care workplaces can happen at any time. Before you move forward in to the to the UUPP, make sure you are safe.

If the person is behaving strangely or aggressively and you feel threatened - get out of the room immediately, call security, call 911 if you have to. Do whatever you need to protect yourself and your colleagues in this situation. Take care of yourself first.

The Universal Upset Patient Protocol below is for the 80% of upset patients and family members who are reasonable and who are *calm-downable*.

THE SETTING:

In the middle of an ordinary day

You find yourself facing an upset person.

This person can be a patient, however the UUPP works for any upset person in any situation - patients, family members, co-workers, colleagues AND it works at home too, with your significant other, children and even complete strangers on the street.

NOTE:

The UUPP relies on you holding your center and remaining calm.

BREATHE and release your own emotions

STICK TO THE SCRIPT below and see how it can quickly defuse what used to be very difficult encounters.

NOTE:

The UUPP works no matter who or what the person is upset about. It works if they are upset AT YOU, your nurse, the office, their husband, the tax man ... it doesn't matter.

Regardless of what/who they are upset with ... the upset usually comes in one of two flavors.

- The person is openly and verbally upset. It is obvious and they are obvious about it. Sometimes you can hear their upset through a closed door.
- The person is upset and NOT talking. They are "seething". You can tell it clearly by their body language and they are not saying anything about it. DO NOT ignore their obvious non-verbal signals. You will waste a lot of time and energy unless you use the UUPP with these people too.

Step 1) RECOGNIZE THEIR UPSET AND SAY ... "*You sound/look really upset.*"

The upset person will say one of two things

"You bet I am"

Or

"No I'm not ... I am ANGRY/FRUSTRATED/HURT/SAD/FURIOUS."

They may name a different emotion than the one you called out.

If that happens, a part of you will think you have "made a mistake" here. You didn't name the right emotion!

Just let that go. The simple act of you commenting on their upset ... caused them to look inside and clarify exactly what they were feeling.

That clarification is the first start of them venting and moving forward.

Step 2) You say, "*Tell me about it.*" or "*Tell me what happened.*"

The upset person does not usually hesitate when you give them this invitation. They will take right off into an emotion filled description of what happened.

Your job here is simple ... LISTEN. Really listen.

Look to understand their viewpoint here. Muster up as much empathy as you can. Help them "get it all out of their system".

Step 3) When they are all done ... look them in the eyes and say,

"I am so sorry this is happening to you".

Step 4) Ask, "What would you like me to do, to help you?"

Most of the time, the upset person will have a specific request. Listen carefully as they make it and notice whether or not you are willing to do what they want you to. This is your opportunity to notice your boundaries for the next step.

Listen to what they request and notice what you are willing to do to help them.

Step 5) Give them your thoughts. "Here's what I am willing to do"

If the upset person has asked you to take a specific action - and you are willing to do it - tell them so.

If the upset person's request is NOT something you are willing to do - set your boundaries and communicate them clearly.

Tell them you are NOT willing to do what they request and do not stop there.

Tell them what you ARE willing to try instead.

Ask if your proposal works for them. It usually only takes a minute or two to come to an agreement here.

Step 6) Thank the upset person for being open with you.

"Thank you for telling me how you really feel ... it is important to me that we understand each other clearly".

This conversation of empathy, listening and understanding can be the catalyst for a major improvement in your relationship with this patient and their family.

MOVE ON ...

You have now effectively "cleared the air" with this patient and you can move on to the clinical reasons for their visit today.

Even though the full UUPP above has 6 steps, the whole protocol conversation may take only 2-4 minutes

IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE UUPP - and either try to defend or fix the problem up front -- you are in for a 20-minute kerfuffle every time ... because people really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Here's the UUPP CHECKLIST

- "You look really upset"
- "Tell me about it"
- "I am so sorry that happened to you"
- "What would you like me to do to help you"
- "Here's what I am willing to do"
- "Thanks for telling me how you are really feeling"

NEXT STEPS:

PRACTICE - PRACTICE - PRACTICE

- Print out this document
 - Study it
 - Grab a friend who will help you practice by playing the part of the upset person
 - PRACTICE until you are comfortable with the steps and phrases
 - **USE THE UUPP WITH YOUR NEXT UPSET PERSON**
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That's all for now. Keep breathing and have a great rest of your day,



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