



Emotions are processed faster than facts when facing threat. Expect emotions and address them first.

I. GIVING INFORMATION

Headline To succinctly share difficult health information. Pairs **information** with its **meaning**.

- "Unfortunately, your scans show that the **cancer got bigger**, which is why you have **more pain and feel so tired**."
- "Despite medical treatment the **infection is worse**. This makes me worried that **time may be short**."

Reframe To share that the status quo treatment is no longer working. A change is needed.

- "I am worried we are in a **different place now**."

Big Picture To move away from discussing the details and share the underlying illnesses impact.

- "I wonder if talking about **the big picture** can help explain why the lab values are not where we want them to be."

II. RESPONDING TO EMOTION

NURSE Empathic phrases to respond to emotion. Choose one. Leave room for silence afterward.

- **NAME** "It sounds like you are upset to hear this news."
- **UNDERSTAND** "I can't imagine how difficult it must be to hear this information."
- **RESPECT** "I admire how much you have done for your mother."
- **SUPPORT** "Our team will do everything that is in our power to support and care for you."
- **EXPLORE** "Tell me more..." or "Tell me more about what you mean when you say..."

I wish / I had hoped A way to articulate empathy by aligning yourself with patient hopes.

- "**I wish** I had better news." / "**I had hoped** to be able to share better news."
- "**I wish** we had more treatment options." / "**I had hoped** more treatment options would be available."

Wish / Worry When a patient or family has an unrealistic treatment goal or hope.

- "**I wish** the treatment could make him stronger. **I worry** it will not help him achieve that goal anymore."
- "**I wish** we didn't have to discuss this now. **I'm worried** we're at a point where we need to make difficult decisions."

III. ASKING PERMISSION

I wonder A way to gently ask to move a conversation forward or to think about a difficult topic.

- "**I wonder** if we can talk about other ways for us to help you if the treatment does not work as planned?"
- "**I wonder** if we can have a conversation about what your day-to-day living may look like as your illness progresses?"