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Why is it essential to be prepared for challenging interactions with clinicians?

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Learning Objectives

- List and describe the various factors that may contribute to challenging interactions with a clinician.
- Implement practical approaches and tools for challenging interactions with clinicians.
- Determine if an effective approach can be taken to improve challenging interactions or if the situation warrants escalation.

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What Do Challenging Situations for MSPs Look Like?

- **Communication style:**
Aggressive, argumentative, dismissive, crossing boundaries (physical, time)
- **Behaviors:**
Condescending, unprofessional, inappropriate, annoying, subtle
- **Locations:**
In-person, virtual, phone, email, text, etc.

Benefits to Being Prepared for These Interactions

- Increases efficiency, saving your time for other responsibilities
- Decreases frustration in the workplace
- Equipped team members can save leaders time and prepares team for leadership
- MSPs are gatekeepers of patient safety

Case Scenario 1

- Hiring process complete “contingent upon successful completion of the credentialing process”
- First call (annoyed) - “Why am I expected to complete this credentialing application?”
- Second call (aggressive) - “I already provided all of this information!”
- Third call (yelling) - “Credentialing is really dumb!”

Case Scenario 2

- You report to new CMO, culture already feels very different
- Chief of Surgery just resigned, CMO tells you who will be appointed
- Medical staff bylaws require election to fill a vacancy in office
- CMO tells you “You need to get the bylaws changed, this needs to happen”

The Risk of Labeling Clinicians as “Difficult/Challenging”

- Difficult interactions/situations versus difficult clinician
 1. Single event or pattern
 2. Communication difficult with one team member or entire team
 3. Specific topic
- Define acceptable level of challenge when working with a clinician

The Power of Empathy

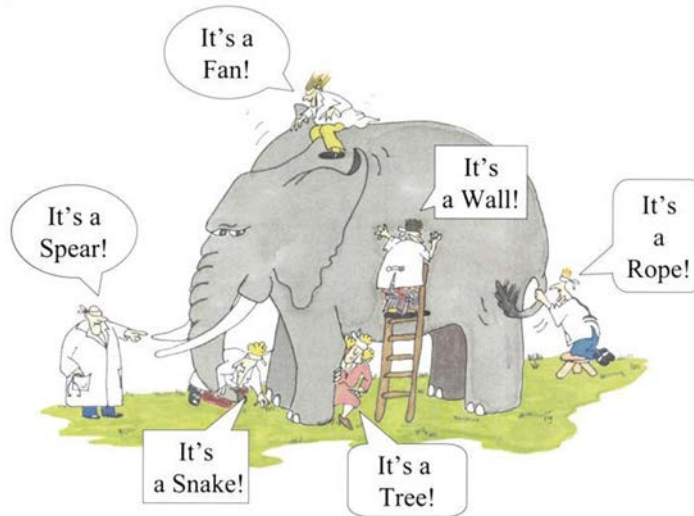
The Oxford Dictionary defines empathy as:

n. the ability to imagine and understand the thoughts, perspective, and emotions of another person.

Sympathy (understanding someone’s emotions from our perspective)

Compassion (empathy + action)

Empathy and Perspective



Empathy Provides Insight

- Characteristics of “difficult clinicians”
- What MAY be contributing to their behavior:
 - Pressure to perform, personal health concerns, personal/family circumstances, experience at previous institutions, poor outcome, etc.
- Focus on gaining understanding rather than simply learning facts

Principles for Challenging Interactions

1. Preparation: Be proactive in your preparation

- Train your team with scenarios so that they aren't surprised
- Train your team members to be able to share or quote policies
- Recognizing when a difficult situation is developing

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2. Consistency: Be consistent application of the rules/policies

- Documentation

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 - Recognizing when a difficult situation is developing
- 2. Consistency:** Be consistent application of the rules/policies
 - Documentation
- 3. Guidelines:** Be intentional about when, where, and how situations are addressed

Challenging Interactions in a Virtual Setting

- Treat all calls as if they were in-person meetings
(professional interactions, form of address, task-oriented)
- Professional appearance and background

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Start with self-awareness

- How do you respond in these situations?
- Know your triggers
 - If someone says/does _____ or when ____ happens, I feel _____.

Practical Tool: “Name it to tame it”

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Enter the conversation with confidence

- Be empowered in your work role
- Know your objective
- Be true and authentic to who you are

Practical Tool: Monitor your facial expressions, body language, and tone

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Intentionally practice maintaining your composure

- “Cool” state vs. “hot” state
- Plan your responses to potential triggers (if the conversation escalates, the provider gets angry, a call or meeting is ended, etc.)

Practical Tool: Practice out loud

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Have a plan for when a challenge arises

- Anticipate difficult conversations relating to your role
- Develop short scripts

Practical Tool: Memorize one-liners

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

The conversation

- Be direct, start with the bottom line
- Tone and language in emails
- Control the temperature in the room
- Assure consistent application of policy
- Remember your goals = their goals

Practical Tool: Turn the conversation into action

Practical Approaches to Challenging Interactions

Use pauses during the conversation

- Helps you to remain in a cool state
- Allows them time and space to react and share
- Communicates respect

Practical Tool: The 8-second rule

Practical Tool: “WAIT” - “why am I talking?”

When an Interaction Escalates...

Try to calm the waters

Practical Tool: Snowglobe technique

Have a de-escalation plan

- Is it productive to continue the conversation?
- Setting boundaries

Practical Tool: Mini time-out

Empathy as a Communication Tool

Communicating empathy and understanding

- Attentiveness builds trust
- Listening and reflecting back
 - “I can see you are surprised/upset/frustrated/confused...”
 - “Help me understand why you feel this way”
- Acknowledgement of their perspective
- Do not interrupt them

Practical Tool: Use empathy to craft your response

Case Scenario 1 Roundtable Discussion

- Hiring process complete “contingent upon successful completion of the credentialing process”
- First call (annoyed) - “Why am I expected to complete this credentialing application?”
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Discussion Questions:

1. Can you apply empathy to these interactions?
2. Should you escalate to a supervisor and if so, at what point?
3. Which of the practical tools discussed is appropriate to use in this scenario?

Case Scenario 2 Roundtable Discussion

- You report to new CMO, culture already feels very different
- Chief of Surgery just resigned, CMO tells you who will be appointed
- Medical staff bylaws require election to fill a vacancy in office
- CMO tells you “You need to get the bylaws changed, this needs to happen”

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you respond in the moment?
2. What approach do you take following the initial conversation?
3. Which of the practical tools discussed is appropriate to use in this scenario?

Review of Practical Tools

1. “Name it to tame it”
2. Monitor your facial expressions, body language, and tone
3. Practice out loud
4. Memorize one-liners
5. Turn the conversation into action
6. The 8-second rule
7. “WAIT” - why am I talking?
8. Snowglobe technique
9. Mini time-out
10. Use empathy to craft your response

Questions?

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