



PLANETREE

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How Does Empathy Invite  
Patients In?



# Empathy

*the ability to understand and share the feelings of another*



**EMPATHY  
ENERGIZES CONNECTION**



**SYMPATHY  
DRIVES DISCONNECTION**

Brene Brown



# Empathy + Compassion = Quality Care

Medical professionals who communicate with empathy **have higher patient satisfaction ratings.** *(Reiss, 2012)*

Patients who experience empathic care **have better medical outcomes.** *(Hojat, 2011)*

**Adherence to treatment recommendations increases** with compassionate care. *(Halpern, 2010)*

Communicating empathically **increases clinician job satisfaction and reduces burnout.** *(Krasner, 2009; Shanafelt, 2009; West, 2011)*

Enhanced empathic care and **physician well-being** are highly correlated. *(Shanafelt, 2005)*

Empathic clinician communication **improves the quality of all interactions** with others; patients, their families, colleagues, and loved ones. *(Halpern, 2012)*

**E**ye contact

**M**uscles of facial expression

**P**osture

**A**ffect

**T**one of voice

**H**earing the whole person (context)

**Y**our response

*Dr. Helen Reiss, Empathetics*



# Inviting the Patient In

- Start by understanding their needs
  - Conversational = telling *my* story as a patient
- Memorize what information is necessary to integrate into conversation, keep the form and/or screen out of the relationship
  - Tips for Epic Implementation and Integration
    - Design a functional processes that allow for the computer screen to be both visible and not obtrusive to the relationship.
    - If using a tablet computer, include the patient and/or family member in the charting process



# Inviting the Patient In

- Use open ended probes to draw the patient into a larger conversation:
  - Tell me more about how you are feeling.
  - Help me understand ways that I can assist you.
  - Would you like to explore options?
  - Describe for me how your pain affects your activities each day.
- Empathetic responses rarely begin with the phrase, “*at least.*”



*“They made me feel like they understood,  
like I was a person,  
not my disease.”*

*Patient, Finsen Center*





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# Chicago

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