



Project Number: 2016-1-RO01-KA203-024630

Communicating with Children

Practical Activity

Communicating with adolescents – Role-play and reflective learning

Problem addressed: Surpassing communication barriers with an adolescent patient

Soft skills: empathetic listening, cooperation and building confidence, resilience

Method: Reflective learning, role-play

Goal of the activity: awareness of age-related communication; develop competence of communication skills in interviewing.

Organization of role-play: Students form groups of three: pediatrician, adolescent-patient, observer.

Structured approach to role-play: students rotate through the roles.

Each role will benefit students as they are encouraged to experience different perspectives and be flexible.

They will also reflect on their learning experience and provide feedback (observer). Written reflection on performance is also encouraged.

Roles are allocated: 5 minutes preparation, 5 minutes – role play and 10 minutes feedback.

Pediatrician role: You have known Andrea since she was a kid as a very optimistic and talkative girl. The last time she was in your office was last winter when she had a flu. At that time she was a little overweight but now you think she looks rather skinny. She complains about hair loss and severe tiredness and she seems a little less verbose than usual. You try to make her open up as you suspect there might be some other hidden underlying problem. Invite her to tell the story of her complaint, switch off your mobile phone to show respect and ensure privacy and intimacy, try to build rapport, smile and apply some strategies such as: re-assure her she can trust you, you can help; do not address her didactically: Do not “talk down”, Avoid using judgmental questions as this might embarrass your patient such as: You’ve lost so much weight since I last saw you... What diet have you been following? **Pause and actively listen** Use a lot of humour and creativity, observe her body language, use positive role models with high moral standards, stories about balancing the influence of family/friends/media. Be professional but also able to negotiate in a respectful and trustworthy atmosphere. **Reflect with empathy**

Patient role: You are Andrea, a sixteen year-old girl, who presents to your pediatrician’s office just because lately you’ve been worried about your abundant hair loss and your feeling tired most of the time. You do not want to tell the doctor that you’ve continuously been dieting and minutely calculating all the calories you have been eating.

You do not have confidence in anybody but yourself, try to conceal your drastic diets and are afraid of opening up. So your answers to the doctor’s questions are very short and blunt. However, you’ve been



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losing your hair and you seem to feel tired all the time, which is why you still feel you have to get some medical attention. At one moment of your discussion you may seem to be convinced to give up dieting....

Observer role: Observe carefully/(take notes) the communication between the pediatrician and the patient. You will have to be able to answer the following questions and give feedback on them.

How did you feel during the interview?

Describe two aspects of the interview that worked well.

Ask the Patient: Identify two communication skills that the pediatrician used that were effective. Provide feedback to the patient

Ask the Pediatrician: Identify two aspects of the interview that you would do differently if you were to repeat the interview.

Ask the patient: Identify two communication skills that the student could have used to improve the interview

Summarize feedback on things that worked well and things that need to be improved.

- Students are encouraged to **reflect in writing** on their experience of communicating with an adolescent, which will also teach them resilience, engaging in conversation with an introverted adolescent and negotiating future diets by reflecting back on their actions (*reflection-on-action*).
- Teacher emphasizes key aspects of communicating with adolescents.

Online resource

Role-play for medical students learning about communication: Guidelines for maximising benefits
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1828731/>



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