



# Do not Fear the Bully - Be Confident and Expressive

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When I was promoted to a nurse from an intern, my communication sometimes stunned the patients, made them uncomfortable and even angry. I often used the phrase: “I don’t know how to say.” This is unprofessional in front of the patient’s family. And they even replied: “I don’t want a student intern! Please find me someone more senior!” After self-reflection, I realized that my poor choice of words made patients and their families unpleasant. But because I lacked confidence in communicating with patients, I always used this phrase to hide, and the problem persisted.

However, after I consulted with senior colleagues and learned from their experience, the situation gradually improved, though slowly. They also guided me step by step.

But when I encountered bossy patients or family, my first choice of words “I don’t know how to say” would come out of my mouth unconsciously.

There are many examples, for instance, patients are not allowed to have visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But there are still family members sneaked through. I explained to them nicely their visits broke the rules. Some family members would say unpleasant words or even shout loudly: “I am just visiting my loved ones, it will be fine. I did not run around, I’ve been home all the time.”

“This is the current government regulation, only the chronic wards and intensive care units are open for visits. Our regular ward is not open for visits. We have to ask visitors to leave as soon as possible, so that they will not be reported. We need to protect all family members and patients in other wards.”



No matter how I explained, some family members still argued with their utmost efforts. “You all have these regulations, how do I explain to my families at home, they are worried too! Just have a look, it won’t hurt! Why do you have to be this strict?”

When I was overwhelmed, I simply said, “I don’t know how to say.” Family members became irritated, and the argument went louder and louder. I said, “Auntie and Uncle! Please calm down first, and I will ask my senior colleagues to explain to you.” I had no choice but asked my senior colleagues to come to my rescue.

After work, I reflected on the conversations with patient’s family. I also discussed it with my mother. My mother criticized my carelessness. Often times I am too candid and offend people. She reminded me to speak more tactfully and hold back from focusing on the negatives. My mother always taught me: “If you really don’t know something, you still have to show your self-confidence. You want patients to believe you. Talking is an art. Practice it day after day will improve over time.”

It has been half-a-year since I entered the clinical workplace, I am still learning and practicing communication. I think about the old self compared with the present me. With the encouragement from my senior colleagues and my family, I have made great progress in communication. Now, when I interact with the patients and family, I can confidently show a smile. I often chat with patients during the treatment, we share the joy. I no longer worry about not knowing how to express myself.