

Whether you're a CNA, LPN, [RN](#) or [NP](#), you will likely have to deal with difficult patients throughout your career. While it's certainly understandable that patients who are feeling pain, have lost their independence or are experiencing stress and anxiety will sometimes lose control of their emotions, it doesn't make it any easier on you. These angry and upset patients can test your compassion, communication skills and patience.

First, learn to recognize the early signs a patient is becoming angry or upset, which may be a tightened jaw, clenched fists, or significant changes in behavior. Next, you can employ a few strategies to defuse the situation before it spirals out of control – such as these six tips for dealing with difficult patients:

## 1. Remain Calm

When dealing with trying patients, the best approach is to remain calm. Remember that the patient is not attacking you personally, but rather acting out on feelings of anxiety, a perceived lack of attention or resistance to what has happened to them. Remaining calm will allow you to keep control and address the patient in a way that will defuse the situation.

## 2. Engage in Conversation

Try to draw out the patient's feelings by engaging in conversation. Frequently, they just want to be heard. Use the patient's name, maintain eye contact and speak softly, even if the patient is yelling. Avoid negative language; instead try statements that begin with "Let me explain," "May I suggest?" or "Your options are."

Or, ask if the patient has any ideas such as, "Can you tell me what you need?" or "Do you have suggestions on how to solve this problem?" Let the patient know you understand his or her feelings, and practice active listening: paraphrase back what the patient just told you, and then calmly explain the situation.

## 3. Be Empathetic

One of the quickest ways to calm an angry or difficult patient is by being empathetic. Remind yourself that it's not easy to be in the hospital, in pain

and away from loved ones. Rather than being defensive, treat all patients with respect. Tell them you understand how upsetting the situation must be. Demonstrate that you care about them, are interested in them and that they are important to you.

#### 4. Avoid Arguing

Upset patients may try to pull you into an argument. While you are completely entitled to voice your opinion, it's important to do so respectfully. Instead of explaining why they are not getting the attention they want, or why their medications were late, simply apologize and reassure the patient that you will take care of it.

#### 5. Set Boundaries

When it comes to difficult patients who make seemingly endless or unreasonable demands, a useful approach is to set limits. Let them know you will check on them again in 15 minutes or a half hour, and then follow through. In some situations, you'll need to set boundaries to keep yourself safe. Doing so can help avoid escalating anger.

#### 6. Shake it Off

After an unpleasant interaction with a difficult patient, it's normal to feel upset or angry. Take a moment to let those feelings go, so your whole day isn't ruined. Take a deep, cleansing breath and as you exhale, let out all the stress and anger. Remind yourself that nursing is not easy, but you have the strength and skill to handle whatever difficulties come your way. Acknowledge that this will pass, and that you'll feel much better if you shake it off.

### Difficult Patients are Part of Nursing

While it's not the best aspect of the Home Healthcare , difficult patients are unavoidable. But they don't have to bring you down. Just follow these six tips, and you'll soon be handling even the most exasperating patients with empathy and professionalism.

# Resolution Strategies for Aggressive Patients

- Speak softly and refrain from having a judgemental attitude
- Try to remain neutral, although it may be difficult with an irrational patient
- Put some distance between yourself and the patient, and do not make intense eye contact. This could set them off
- Try to demonstrate control of the situation without becoming demanding or authoritative; and
- Seek to smooth the situation over rather than bully the patient into better behaviour.