Team Discussion Guide: Handling Upset Patients with Confidence and Compassion

This discussion guide is designed to accompany the podcast episode *How to Handle Upset Patients Like a Total Pro*. Use it to reinforce key takeaways, reflect as a team, and roleplay common scenarios.

Key Takeaways

• Responding with empathy keeps patients from feeling dismissed.

• You don't have to accept blame to take ownership of the solution.

• Avoid over-explaining or justifying—focus on what you *can* do next.

• Appreciation is often more powerful than apology.

• You don't need to be right—focus on being helpful.

• Verbal abuse is never acceptable; you have the right to set boundaries.

Discussion Questions

• Which of the 4 response steps do we do well as a team? Which one could we improve?

• Have you ever found yourself trying to 'win' an argument with a patient? What was the outcome?

• What's your go-to phrase when a patient is upset? Could it be more empathetic or solution-focused?

• How comfortable do you feel setting boundaries with a verbally abusive patient? What support would help you feel more confident?

• What's one small phrase change you could try this week during tough patient conversations?

• How can we support each other better when one of us is dealing with a difficult patient situation?

Suggested Roleplay Scenarios

- A patient is angry about not seeing their regular provider.
- A patient is upset about a bill they don't understand.
- A patient is yelling on the phone after not receiving a callback.
- A patient refuses to pay at the time of scheduling.
- A patient is verbally abusive to a team member over a schedule change.

Team Action Steps

- Choose one mic-drop boundary phrase to post near your phone or desk.
- Pair up and practice at least one roleplay using the cheat sheet.
- Agree on a team signal or code word to support each other during tough interactions.
- Update your verbal scripts or phone guidelines using what you learned today.
- Reflect weekly as a team: What went well? What could we try differently next time?