

Empathy Map Worksheet

Empathy in Clinical Practice | Listen past the words to what your patient needs

How to use this worksheet

Patients rarely say exactly what they mean. Use this worksheet to practice listening past the literal words to the emotion and need underneath them.

Steps:

1. Recall one real (or realistic) patient interaction where a patient's words and their emotional state didn't quite match.
2. In column 1, write what the patient actually said, as close to verbatim as you can recall.
3. In column 2, write your best read on the unstated feeling underneath those words — a fear, a worry, a need to appear a certain way.
4. In column 3, write what that patient likely needed from you — not what you said next, but what would have addressed the unstated feeling.
5. Repeat with 2-3 more examples from your own practice, using the blank rows below.

Tip: If you get stuck on column 2, ask yourself: “If I were this patient, in this situation, what would I be afraid to say out loud?”

What the patient SAID	What the patient may be FEELING (unstated)	What the patient likely NEEDS from you