In times of crisis, it is valuable to take a moment to reflect on self-care and communication techniques that may help to manage the many demands and emotions experienced during the crisis. During this time, feelings of isolation, lack of control, disruption in identity and routine, and feelings of grief and uncertainty are very common among our staff, patients, families, and the wider community. We recognize that you may also be worried about your own health and that of your families. Especially during these increasingly stressful times, your coordinated effort and relentless commitment is noticed, valued, and appreciated. Your Beaumont community is grateful you are here. This is a resource to support patient and family communication and staff well-being as we move through these uncertain times together.

Communication Skills in Action

- Share the "bad news" including "why."
- Apologize for their suffering.
- Acknowledge the emotion.
- Remind them "why" we are taking this action – "the facts."
- Provide options and alternatives.
- Reassure them that their loved one is being well-cared for.
- Thank them for their understanding.

Establish a strategy for support. When telling a family member that they cannot be present with their loved one or delivering other bad news, it is important to have a plan for available options and resources. *Talking about what you can do and not only about what you can't do* may help to alleviate feelings of helplessness. Families may be worried their loved one will not receive appropriate medical care if they are not there to advocate for them.

Assess Understanding: Determine the amount of information known regarding the concern or how much information is desired by asking open ended questions. Validate the person's emotions and experiences and set the stage to allow the patient and family to emotionally brace for the news or information: "Unfortunately, I have some bad news to tell you" or "I am sorry to tell you...".

Reflective Listening. Give your full attention by sitting down, making direct eye contact, encouraging conversation, and giving an occasional nod or smile to show understanding of what a person says and what a person feels. Be aware of your nonverbal actions including facial expressions and body posturing. Relay the information you heard back in a reflective or summarizing statement to ensure you understand and respect the other person's point of view.

Empathize: Exploring and validating emotions will work to establish a sense of trust and togetherness to facilitate coping for all. Patients and families may have emotional responses that vary from silence to anger, confusion, or crying. Be aware that times of stress are particularly challenging for those with pre-existing mental health issues. Recognize severe distress, respond with empathy, acknowledge feelings of frustration, and refer to appropriate services and resources for team-based support.

Practice maintaining your calm. Increasing your awareness of your breathing and shifting to more abdominal breathing will help to reduce stress and tension. Finding balance with adequate sleep, nutritious food, walks, journaling and meditation. An attitude of curiosity, being aware of your emotions, and remaining nonjudgmental allows for reflection and more clarity in problem solving.

Communicate your needs. Taking time for team huddles, rounding, and individual check-ins allow for the opportunity to not only share your feelings but also the ability to offer higher quality, wholistic care. Defining your boundaries and being aware of your triggers can prevent with getting drawn into a conflict. Simply stating your feelings helps others understand your point-of-view and can improve collaboration among the group.