



LEND SUPPORT TO A PATIENT OR FAMILY MEMBER IMPACTED BY AN ADVERSE MEDICAL EVENT

Patients and families may feel a mix of emotions following an adverse medical event, including:

- Sadness
- Anger
- Mistrust
- Isolation
- Betrayal
- Guilt
- Shame
- Fear
- Loss

Although some people may begin to feel these emotions while still in the hospital, most patients are focused on their physical healing during that time and will likely experience them at a later date. This can be confusing and disorienting if they are not prepared for the possibility of such reactions.

When confronted with such intense emotions, it can be difficult to know how to best support the patient/family member in their healing process. It may be helpful to provide the following:

- **LISTENING** - The goal of listening in this situation is not to placate, but to demonstrate a desire to understand how the patient feels. Listening in this way is of enormous value to the patient/family member.
- **EMPATHIC RESPONSE** - *While it is impossible to completely understand what the patient is going through, it is important to show a desire to understand and a willingness to be supportive. The focus here is not on fixing the problem, but allowing the patient/family member a place to express their pain. If you know this is not the right position for you, send someone else.*
- **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** - Throughout the conversation, try to identify the person's needs.

Stress may be related to:

 - Fears around loss of income (need may be for housing assistance)
 - triggering of a previous traumatic event (a mental health referral may be necessary)
 - feelings of isolation and worthlessness (validation may be important). Reassuring a person of their value as a human being is vital after an adverse medical event.
- **DIRECTION TO SERVICES** - It is very important to follow through with commitments made and direct the patient or family member to any and all services that may benefit them. Pastoral Care, the Social Work Department, and MITSS are all resources available for follow-up support. It is important that patients/families do NOT leave without having some kind of resources to turn to when the going gets rough.

Remember, a supportive staff **LENDs** a supportive hand!