# Awareness and Sensitivity to Clients’ Needs (AS) Activities

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## Icebreakers

Ask students to bring an item that holds special meaning to them. Sharing the story behind the object can provide insights into their values, relationships, and life experiences, helping to build empathy and understanding.

Encourage students to share a story about a significant moment in their life. This can be a powerful way to build trust and understanding, as well as to recognize the unique experiences each person brings to the table.

## Video Links

[Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vapEpQmz86o)

[Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages of Development-First Four](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_IY-pFK3qI)

[Kevin Breel’s story on Depression](https://youtu.be/-Qe8cR4Jl10)

[Laura Burke’s Story on Mental Illness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mdSYKqccpo)

[The Brown’s Family Story of Mental Illness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWnjhhz4DbE)

[Cleveland Clinic Empathy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDDWvj_q-o8)

[Say This, Not That: Patient Experience](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r842Ylpa-nQ)

## Example discussion prompts (in-class or online)

**Discussion Prompt: Empathy in Action**  
Think of a common situation in healthcare (e.g., a patient in pain, a family member asking for an update, someone feeling nervous before a procedure). Write or act out (if in person) **two responses** to the situation: one that shows empathy and one that does not. Post your scenarios (or act out) and ask your classmates to guess which is the empathetic response. After they respond, explain what made one response more effective than the other.

Bonus: Share a phrase or action you think is especially helpful in showing empathy.

**Life Stages Discussion**

Think critically and write an original discussion post that describes: How identifying common illnesses, diseases, and developmental issues for a specific age group is useful for healthcare professionals. Provide an example from the video [Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vapEpQmz86o)

After writing an initial post, reply to at least three different classmates in response to their initial post. Write a constructive response and ask questions. Simply agreeing, disagreeing, or thanking someone for the post is not acceptable. Ask questions and fully explain your viewpoint.

**Chronic Disease & Customer Service Presentation**

Your supervisor has given you the task of making a presentation for your coworkers about how to provide a high level of care to a patient with a chronic disease.

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronic-disease/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm#print>

* Select a chronic disease.
* Include the risk factors.
* Ways to prevent the disease.
* Explain how to provide a high level of patient care.
* Create a PowerPoint that contains a minimum of 6 slides. Choose a design template that is easy to read (avoid templates with small text or distracting elements). Include a title slide and works cited. Review your work for grammar, spelling, or word choice errors.
* Upload your presentation before the due date.

**Recognizing Empathy Gaps in Healthcare Communication**

After watching the **“**[**Say This, Not That: Patient Experience**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r842Ylpa-nQ&ab_channel=EIRMC)**”** video, take a moment to reflect and respond:

1. **What did you notice?**
   * Identify specific interactions or phrases in the video that **felt unempathetic** or caused discomfort for the patient or family.
2. **What was missing?**
   * Describe communication components that were absent—such as **tone, body language, listening, reassurance**, or **correct word choice**. Use examples from what you observed.
3. **Why might people not show empathy in their roles?**
   * Reflect on possible reasons: being rushed, stress, habit, lack of training, or emotional burnout. How could these affect patient care?
4. **How could a more empathetic response change the outcome?**
   * Rewrite one unempathetic phrase from the video into a more caring and supportive version.

## Seeing Through Their Eyes: Empathy in Healthcare

30–45 minutes, in-person, online, whole group or small groups

**Competency**: 3

**Materials**

* Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care by Cleveland Clinic [Watch on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYhpxn81xus&ab_channel=ProfessionalNursesAcademy)
* Student writing supplies or note-taking devices
* Optional: T-chart handout or printed discussion prompts

**Set Up**

* Prepare to introduce the concept of empathy before watching the video
* Set expectations for note-taking: students will track observations, thoughts, emotions, and healthcare roles they notice in the video

**Activity Instructions**

1. Introduce Empathy

Begin with a short class discussion or activity to activate prior knowledge.

Choose one of the following:

* Think-Pair-Share: “What is empathy? How is it different from sympathy?”
* T-Chart: Label one side Empathy and the other Sympathy. Ask students to list behaviors, thoughts, or examples under each.
* Class Discussion: Ask, “When was a time someone showed you empathy? How did it make you feel?”

1. Watch the Video

Play Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care (4:24 min). [Watch on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYhpxn81xus&ab_channel=ProfessionalNursesAcademy)

While watching, ask students to take notes on:

* Their own thoughts, feelings, or reactions
* The message of the video
* Which healthcare roles they see (e.g., nurse, doctor, environmental services, etc.)

1. Debrief & Reflect

After watching, facilitate a discussion using questions such as:

* What emotions did you feel while watching this video?
* Which part stood out to you most? Why?
* Which healthcare workers did you see? How did their actions connect to empathy?
* What does this video tell us about the patient experience?
* Why is empathy important in healthcare?

1. Final Reflection Prompt (Optional, written or verbal):

* Why do you think empathy is essential in healthcare?
* How can you personally show empathy as a future healthcare worker?

## This or That: Comfort, Communication, and Self-Care

20–30 minutes, in-person, whole group

**Competencies:** 1, 3, or 4

**Instructions:**

Designate one side of the room as “This” and the other side as “That.” Read each pair of options aloud. Students will move to the side that best reflects their personal preference either in the role of a patient, co-worker, or for self care. After each round, invite 1–2 students to explain their choice (optional but encouraged).

Let students know: “This activity helps us understand that everyone has different needs when it comes to communication, comfort, and self-care. In healthcare, recognizing those differences helps us provide better, more respectful care.”

Some examples below, use the ones that work for your class or make up your own!

**Communication & Comfort**

* Lots of talking and cross-talk OR Quiet conversations with space to think
* Being greeted with a big smile and high energy OR Being greeted calmly and respectfully
* Getting straight-to-the-point instructions OR Getting detailed step-by-step guidance
* Being asked a lot of questions to understand what’s wrong OR Being given time to share on your own terms
* Sitting close when upset OR Having personal space and quiet support

**Self-Care & Stress Relief**

* Exercising or being physically active to relax OR Doing something calming like reading, drawing, or journaling
* Spending time with friends when stressed OR Having alone time to recharge
* Staying busy when overwhelmed OR Taking a break to reset and slow down
* Talking to someone about what’s bothering you OR Working through it on your own first
* End the day with exercise or movement to shake off stress OR Unwind with something creative, quiet, or relaxing at home

**Debrief Discussion (choose a few or use as reflection questions):**

* Did context matter with your answer? Why is this important to keep in mind as a healthcare provider?
* What did you learn about yourself or your classmates during this activity?
* Were you surprised by how different people’s preferences were?
* How could these differences affect how we support patients or coworkers in healthcare?
* Why is it important not to assume that what helps you will help everyone?

## Letter to the Family

60 minute, in-person or online, individual and share with whole group

**Competencies:** 4, 5, 8  
This activity helps you explore how illness affects not only the patient but also the family. You’ll take the perspective of a healthcare worker providing education, empathy, and resources to support a patient’s family.

**Instructions:**  
Choose a chronic or acute disease, then write a letter addressed to the patient’s family. Your goal is to explain the condition in a clear and caring way and help the family understand how it may affect different areas of their lives.

**Your letter should include:**

* A short, easy-to-understand **summary of the disease and its treatment**
* **Two or more areas** where the disease might impact the family (such as:  
  emotional, financial, relationships, education, work, social life, or leisure)
* An explanation of the impact, and **helpful suggestions or resources** the family can use
* The proper elements of a letter: **heading, greeting, body, closing, and signature**

**Materials:**

* Writing supplies or computer
* Research tools (textbook, internet, or handouts about diseases)

**Reflection/Discussion (optional):**

* What was it like to write from a healthcare worker’s perspective?
* How can empathy and clear communication improve how families manage a loved one’s diagnosis?