

*****EMPATHIC RESPONSES*****

| | Understanding | Respecting | Supporting | Exploring | “I Wish” |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| This must be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrating • Overwhelming • Scary • Difficult • Challenging • Hard | What you just said really helps me understand the situation better. | I really admire your <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith • Strength • Commitment to your family • Thoughtfulness • Love for your family | We will do our very best to make sure you have what you need. | Could you say more about what you mean when you say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don’t want to give up • I am hoping for a miracle | I wish we had a treatment that would cure you (make your illness go away). *[Remember we do have palliative treatments to offer the patient] |
| I’m wondering if you are feeling ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad • Scared • Frustrated • Overwhelmed • Anxious • Nervous • Angry | This really helps me better understand what you are thinking. | You (or your dad, mom, child, spouse) are/is such a strong person and have/has been through so much. | Our team is here to help you with this. | Help me understand more about..... | I wish I had better news. |
| It sounds like you may be feeling ... | I can see how dealing with this might be ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard on you • frustrating • challenging • scary | I can really see how (strong, dedicated, loving, caring, etc.) you are. | We will work hard to get you the support that you need. | Tell me more... | I wish the situation were different. |
| In this situation some people might feel ... | I can see how important this is to you. | You are such a (strong, caring, dedicated) person. | We are committed to help you in any way we can. | Tell me more about what [a miracle, fighting, not giving up, etc.] might look like for you? | I wish that for you too. [In response to what a patient or family members wishes, such as a miracle] |
| I can’t even imagine how (NAME EMOTION) this must be. | Dealing with this illness has been such a big part of your life and taken so much energy. | I’m really impressed by all that you’ve done to manage your illness (help your loved one deal with their illness). | We will go be here for you. | Can you say more about that? | I wish we weren’t in this spot right now. |

*****RESPONSES TO CHALLENGING QUESTIONS*****

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| <p>God's going to bring me a miracle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hope that for you, too. (Remember: no buts!) (SUPPORTING) • I really admire and respect. your faith (RESPECTING) • Having faith is very important. (RESPECTING) • Can you share with me what a miracle might look like for you? (EXPLORING) | <p>How much time do I have left?</p> <p><i>NOTE: This question may mean many things – they are scared, they want to know so they can plan, they are suffering, etc. Exploring what they want to know can be very helpful.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That is a great question. I am going to answer it the best that I can. Can you tell me what you are worried about? (EXPLORING) • That is a great question. I am going to answer it the best that I can. Can you tell me what information would be most helpful to you? (EXPLORING) | <p>Are you saying there is nothing more you can do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can't even imagine how (NAME EMOTION) this must be. (NAMING) • It sounds like you might be feeling ... (NAMING/EXPLORING) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alone ○ Scared ○ Frustrated ○ Etc. • I wish we had a treatment that would cure you. Our team is here to help you through this. (SUPPORTING) |
| <p>Are you telling me my dad is dying?</p> <p><i>NOTE: These responses will affirm the question empathically – so do not use them if the patient is not dying.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish I had better news. • This must be such a shock for you. (NAMING) • I can't even imagine how difficult this must be. (UNDERSTANDING) | <p>Are you giving up on me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish we had more curative treatments to offer. Our team is committed to help you in every way we can. (SUPPORTING) • We will be here for you. (SUPPORTING) • It sounds like you might be feeling ... (NAMING/EXPLORING) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alone ○ Scared ○ Etc. • We will work hard to get you the support that you need. (SUPPORTING) | <p>My dad is a fighter!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is. He is such a strong person and he has been through so much. (RESPECTING) • I admire that about him. (RESPECTING) • I really admire how much you care about your dad. (RESPECTING) • It must be (NAME EMOTION) to see him so sick. (NAMING) • Tell me more about your dad and what matters most to him. (EXPLORING) |

WISH (HOPE) / WORRY / WONDER

I'm going to beat this/I'm going to live for many years/I think you're wrong.....

I **HOPE** you are right (**validate** patient concerns, goals,) but I am.....

I **WORRIED** because you are having more pain/losing weight/sleeping more (express **empathy/concern**) so.....

I **WONDER** whether we should make a plan in case things don't go as well as we would like? (**reframe/plan**)

***Note: These phrases are examples of empathic continuers. Patients may not immediately respond to your first empathic statement. They will often need multiple successive empathic responses to their questions to work through an emotion. ***