



Respect for People

THE VIRGINIA MASON EXPERIENCE: PATIENTS & FAMILIES, TEAM MEMBERS, COMMUNITY

Speaking Up to Disrespect

The purpose of this activity is to practice ways to speak up when you see or experience disrespect.

STEP 1:

Choose a disrespectful situation that you would like to respond to (select from the list below, or use one from your experience). The disrespectful person can be a frontline team member, leader, provider, patient, family member or vendor.

- A. A person uses words, and/or takes actions, that cut down or unfairly judge you or others
- B. A person makes statements, and/or takes actions, that indicate the person is not supportive of your ideas, input or standard work processes and the situation has moved from constructive dialogue to passive or outright disrespect
- C. A person takes action against you when you speak up to let them know about a barrier or issue occurring in your area

STEP 2:

Share with a partner the situation you selected. Imagine your partner is the person you would like to speak up to. Use the talking points below as a guide when you practice.

Practice calling out disrespect to stop it quickly.

SAY

- “I’m concerned and uncomfortable with [those words; that tone, that touching, the way your body is positioned, etc.]”
- “[The words you used, your expression of anger, that touching, etc.] may cause a safety issue in our team.” *
- “Please speak in a kinder tone, OK?” or
- “Please speak with kinder words, OK?” or
- “Please give me more space, OK?” or
- “Please keep your hands to yourself, OK?”
- “That way we can provide the safest, highest quality care for you [or your family member].” or
- “That way we can do our best work as a team.”

* “Safety” can relate to patient safety and/or each person’s emotional safety.

Once the above talking points are stated, the intervention may end there. Someone was disrespectful, you let them know it, and both parties may leave the situation without fully working through their feelings or next steps so that it doesn’t happen again.

So, go to Step 3 to practice calling others in, which helps work through feelings and get to mutual understanding and action, so disrespect is less likely to reoccur.

STEP 3:

Practice holding a conversation to call others in.

- Name the disrespectful action you observed and how it made you feel.
- Consider your shared values and mutual purpose.
 - “I noticed/saw/witnessed [specify: words, tone, touching, the way your body was positioned, etc.]”
 - “It made me feel concerned and uncomfortable because _____.”
 - “It doesn’t agree with my/our value of _____.”
 - “It doesn’t match what we’re both trying to achieve, which is _____.”
- To help keep it emotionally safe for the other person, state that the disrespect seemed like a misstep out of sync with the person’s character.



- “That seemed out of character for you.” or “That situation surprised me.”
- “What happened from your viewpoint?” or “How are you feeling about it?”



Listen to understand the other’s views. Be patient; withhold judgment.



Agree upon ways to interact differently:

- “What can I/we do in the future to improve?”
- “What will we do?”
- “When will we do it?”
- If the disrespectful person is a patient or family member, understand that they may be feeling especially vulnerable, and focus on expressing how important it is to you to provide the safest, highest quality care.

STEP 4:

Debrief with your partner.

- What went well?

- What areas would you like to improve to gain skill or confidence?

- What’s one next step you will take to apply this skill at work?
