

The RESPECT Model

What is most important in considering the effectiveness of your cross-cultural communication, whether it is verbal, nonverbal, or written, is that you remain open and maintain a sense of respect for your patients. The RESPECT Model¹ can help you remain effective and patient-centered in all of your communication with patients.

Rapport

- Connect on a social level
- See the patient's point of view
- Consciously suspend judgment
- Recognize and avoid making assumptions

Empathy

- Remember the patient has come to you for help
- Seek out and understand the patient's rationale for his/her behaviors and illness
- Verbally acknowledge and legitimize the patient's feelings

Support

- Ask about and understand the barriers to care and compliance
- Help the patient overcome barriers; Involve family members if appropriate
- Reassure the patient you are and will be available to help

Partnership

- Be flexible
- Negotiate roles when necessary
- Stress that you are working together to address health problems

Explanations

- Check often for understanding
- Use verbal clarification techniques

Cultural

- Respect the patient's cultural beliefs
- Understand that the patient's views of you may be defined by ethnic and cultural stereotypes
- Be aware of your own cultural biases and preconceptions
- Know your limitations in addressing health issues across cultures
- Understand your personal style and recognize when it may not be working with a given patient

Competence

Trust

- Recognize that self-disclosure may be difficult for some patients; Consciously work to establish trust

¹ Mutha, S., Allen, C. & Welch, M. (2002). *Toward culturally competent care: A toolbox for teaching communication strategies*. San Francisco, CA: Center for Health Professions, University of California, San Francisco.