Beyond Smile Training:
HARNESSING THE MAGIC OF EMPATHY

KEITH CASEBOLT, CEO
PATTY CASEBOLT, CLINICAL DIRECTOR
MEDICAL EYE CENTER
Financial disclosure

- Casebolt Consulting (Keith and Patty Casebolt)
- Care Credit OSC member (Patty Casebolt)
Smile training - the positive side

- When genuine = engaging, welcoming
- Teaches awareness of emotional engagement
- Inspires a positive attitude
- Increases employee customer service
Smile training - the cautionary side

- Can appear plastic/fake (i.e. pretending)
- Muscle memory - smile doesn’t match situation
- Fake smile “stuffs” emotion
What is the difference between Empathy and Sympathy?

Empathy is walking a mile in somebody else's moccasins. Sympathy is being sorry their feet hurt.

Rebecca O'Donnell
# Empathy vs Sympathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Sympathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledging another person’s emotional hardships and providing comfort and assurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding what others are feeling because you have experienced it yourself or can put yourself in their shoes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Trying to lose weight can often feel like an uphill battle.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I know it’s not easy to lose weight because I have faced the same problems myself.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empathy vs Sympathy continued...

- A person expresses sympathy, but shares empathy.
- Empathy can forge a deeper and more meaningful connection, thus serving as a bridge for greater communication between individuals.
- Empathy can be employed as a communication skill. Empathy can allow great communicators to sense the emotions of another and is the mutual understanding and inspiration communicated to that person.
Why is empathy difficult?

- **Sympathy** does not require the sharing of the same emotional state. Instead, **sympathy** is a concern for the well-being of another. Merriam Webster defines empathy as "the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and **emotions** : the ability to share someone else's feelings."
If empathy is hard - why bother?

- Understanding emotion uncovers the root cause for concern
- Empathy facilitates trust
- Creates a purpose and connection
- Supports the physician/patient relationship (i.e. staff liaison)
- Instills patient loyalty
- Protective against claims
- Customer service - creates “raving fans”
Empathy vs Sympathy continued…

Empathize with the patient

Empathy helps you truly begin to see the problem from the patient’s perspective. **And this perspective will keep you from losing your cool when your patient gets hot.**
Empathy verbiage...

Example- long wait

“I’m sorry you are upset. Nothing is more irritating than to have a long wait time and I would be upset as well. Let me see what I can do to help”
Words That Work: Statements That Facilitate Empathy

Queries

- “Would you (or could you) tell me a little more about that?”
- “What has this been like for you?”
- “Is there anything else?”
- “Are you OK with that?”
- “Hmmmm”
Words That Work: Statements That Facilitate Empathy continued...

**Clarifications**

- “Let me see if I have this right.”
- “I want to make sure I really understand what you’re telling me. I am hearing that...”
- “I don’t want us to go further until I’m sure I’ve gotten it right.”
- “When I’m done, if I’ve gone astray, I’d appreciate it if you would correct me. OK?”
Words That Work: Statements That Facilitate Empathy continued...

**Responses**

- “That sounds very difficult.”
- “Sounds like . . .”
- “That’s great! I bet you’re feeling pretty good about that.”
- “I can imagine that this might feel . . .”
- “Anyone in your situation would feel that way . . .”
- “I can see that you are . . .”
Barriers to empathy...

- Feeling rushed “there’s not enough time- clinic is behind”
- Giving empathy can feel emotionally exhausting
- Fear of opening “Pandora’s box” (i.e. don’t go there)
- Concern for competency (i.e. “I don’t have the training”)
- Defensiveness- taking the situation or feedback personally
Steps to increased empathy

- Self Awareness: self “check in” for one’s own emotion/state
  - Breathe, grounded, slow down
- Recognize the presence of a strong feeling/emotion in the other person
- Visualization: imagine how the other is feeling
- Communication: state your perception of the other’s feelings and identify with that feeling or legitimize that feeling
  - Make eye contact, lean in, practice active listening
- Offer support and partnership to address the issue(s)
  - Restate the issue and check for understanding
  - Make and keep agreements for follow through

Sustainable empathy...

- Build your self esteem- if you’re self concept is up for grabs, you can become defensive very easily.
- Practice mindfulness/meditation/breathing exercises
- Create a back up team- share the load, take a break
- Ask for feedback- what worked, what didn’t work? Make adjustments.
- Celebrate the successes, connections, learning
Questions?
Thank you!

Patty Casebolt, Clinical Director
Medical Eye Center
541-618-1480
patty@medicaleyecenter.com

Keith Casebolt, CEO
Medical Eye Center
541-618-1483
keith@medicaleyecenter.com