



## Narrating

Solution

### What...

Narrating is a communication method in which you **explain** what you are doing - while you are doing it -by using words the patient can understand.

Narrating "connects the dots" to help patients, families, and visitors better understand what you are doing ... and why.

Our unexplained actions or insufficient explanations can:

- ▶ be confusing or misperceived – making it harder for our patients to be cooperative or compliant,
- ▶ create a sense of powerlessness, defensiveness or even be downright scary to our patients,
- ▶ cause our patients to feel like they "are being processed" rather than being cared for as a valued individual.

Why...

With solid explanations,

- ▶ patients become more relaxed, engaged, and cooperative, which can improve your feelings about your interactions with them,
- ▶ helps to make each routine task meaningful, which can help you to stay more focused and make things go along more smoothly and quickly ... and even more safely.

**“Apprehension, uncertainty, waiting, expectation, fear of surprise, do a patient more harm than any physical exertion.”**

- Florence Nightingale



# How...

Employees know the **“what, why, how, and how long”** behind their actions. Narrating is simply the act of saying it out loud while you’re going about your work – in essence, “explaining while doing.” For example: “For your privacy, I’m going to pull this curtain around your stretcher.”

Narrating is not a script that is memorized. Narrating will become incorporated into a personalized and natural part of how employees communicate once they get acclimated to this technique.

As a department leader, employee, provider, or a team aimed at improving the patient experience, it may help to start by considering problematic or key employee-patient interactions in which patient cooperation is most needed, where first or lasting impressions are made, and/or where patient anxiety or confusion may be heightened. You may have access to data or comments from the patient surveys (e.g., noise levels at night, explanation of medications, or concern shown to family and friends). It could be trends of comments during Validation (Patient) Rounding or complaints received.

Then, engage employees to consider how to incorporate narrating while they go about their work – especially in these key (and problematic) interactions. The “WORKSHEET: Key Opportunities for Narrating” (see on following page) can be helpful in considering when narrating can be most helpful

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION: Non-clinical care departments with INTERNAL customers can also serve their team members better by explaining more thoroughly through the use of narrating.

## **TIPS FOR INCREASING THE USE OF NARRATING:**

*Visual cues can be helpful in reminding employees to use narrating (e.g., sign near telephone, a magnet on the patient’s door frame).*

*Start by narrating during simple activities...and then quickly expand to narrating during the most important and problem-prone interactions.*

*With ongoing practice, narrating will become a natural part of how you do your work and how you consistently and clearly communicate.*

*A helpful tip for being more reliable and accurate in your explanations is to “imagine that there is always a student in the room”*



## *WORKSHEET: Key Opportunities for Narrating*

### **Department / Role:**

#1	Describe Key Customer-Employee Interaction:  Why is this interaction a priority to improve?  Example of Narrating:
#2	Describe Key Customer-Employee Interaction:  Why is this interaction a priority to improve?  Example of Narrating:
#3	Describe Key Customer-Employee Interaction:  Why is this interaction a priority to improve?  Example of Narrating:

**Key Customer-Employee Interaction** is when a service is being rendered and an impression is being made. Most often we think of patient-employee interactions. Consider employee-employee interactions in a support department. Consider possible visitor-employee interactions.

**Priorities:** Oftentimes we know which interactions are a priority for improvement due to complaints, negative comments on surveys, low scores on surveys.

**Narrating:** Words we use when providing the service to help explain what we are doing and why we are doing it – while we are doing it. Reduces misperceptions/confusion and decreases anxiety and improves satisfaction. Initial interactions with customers and discharge/ending interactions are often key interactions in many departments. Example: "For your safety, I will verify two forms of identification before providing your treatment" (versus just asking the patient for two forms of identification).

### **Developed by (Team Members):**



## ***SAMPLE - Narrating Improvement Plan***

**Department: Inpatient Psychiatric Unit**

**FOCUS: First Impressions – Admission Process**

**Narrating Example #1: For your safety and privacy, our doors are locked. No one can visit you without your permission. As well, there are specific procedures to follow should you want to leave through these locked doors.**

Situation in which this is communicated: **Upon entry through the locked doors for admission**

Baseline data that supports this as a priority for service improvement:

**Frequent complaints about our doors being locked and what that means (i.e. "feels like a prison")**

What core competency or service element is improved when we communicate these key words to our patients/visitors/families (e.g., pain management, privacy, etc.)?

**Service element - provide support and diminish anxiety-increase patient satisfaction, confidentiality**

**Narrating Example #2: You will be able to use the telephone and have visitors, however, those times are limited so you can be involved in your treatment.**

Situation in which this is communicated: **When touring the new patient to the visitor/telephone lounge.**

Baseline data that supports this as a priority for service improvement: **Trend of patient comments on survey and during rounding about why phone/visitor privileges are scheduled versus open/24/7.**

What core competency or service element is improved when we communicate key words to our patients/visitors/families (e.g., pain management, privacy, etc.)?

**Reinforce active treatment and focus on recovery - leading to greater patient compliance, outcomes & satisfaction.**

