

ADAPTED WORD CHOICE EXERCISE



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Presented at STFM (Society of Teachers in Family Medicine) 2017 with Olivia Perlmutter, Moira Rashid, Ying Zhang, Lealah Pollock, and Sarah McNeil.

Session: Word Choice Exercise

Duration: 1 hour

Sample objectives:

- Describe how language, tone, and touch can trigger patients, including but not limited to LGBTQ patients and/or those with trauma histories;
- Identify preferred words for use during abortion care;
- Teach learners how to watch for non-verbal cues and validate their patients' experiences;
- Help a learner adjust his/her use of triggering, stigmatizing and uncomfortable words and phrases, and be mindful that language choice can be dependent on patient and time; and
- Demonstrate how language, tone, and touch can be optimized to provide compassionate care.

PREPARATION:

Materials for this session:

- At least 3 sheets of 8½ x 11" paper
- Index cards or large format post it notes in at least 5 different colors
- Markers
- Tape

For the visual spectrum: Write out "patient-centered," "neutral" and "triggering/stigmatizing/uncomfortable" on 8½ x 11" pieces of paper to hang up the day of the exercise.

For the word choices: Write different words on different colored index cards. You should use at least 5 different colored index cards for this activity. Each word should be written on the same colored index card for each group so that each group has the same combination of words and colors (e.g. the word “vagina” written on a blue card should be available on a blue card for each group participating in the activity). The words can be on a spectrum from “patient-centered” to “triggering/stigmatizing/uncomfortable.” You can put more patient centered words in soft colors (purple, red, blue for example), and harsher words in yellow and green - to demonstrate how different people feel differently about the same word.

A word that you might think of as patient-centered (“relax”) might not be patient-centered to someone else – that is the point of the exercise.

For group work: Make 5-10 stacks of cards, each with the same set of words, which you will later distribute among the larger group with one stack going to each smaller group. It is good to have enough stacks so that regardless of the size of the audience, each group will get its own stack of words for the exercise.

Here is a list of words to get you started – feel free to adapt and add your own!

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|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1) Stirrups | 14) Melt your bottom to the floor | 26) Birth control |
| 2) Bottom | 15) Tilt your pelvis forward | 27) Child spacing |
| 3) Touch | 16) Come towards me | 28) Numbing medicine |
| 4) Vagina | 17) Lay down on the bed | 29) Sheet |
| 5) Inside exam | 18) It’s almost over | 30) This is my hand on your thigh (getting at “practice touch” |
| 6) Pinch | 19) Prick | 31) Baby |
| 7) Cramp | 20) Table | 32) Pregnancy |
| 8) Clean | 21) Don’t move | 33) Products of conception |
| 9) Relax | 23) Wipe | |
| 10) Control | 24) Let your knees fall open | |
| 11) Feels good | 25) Reproductive organs | |
| 12) Normal | | |
| 13) Open your legs | | |

Here is a list of words to use with Spanish speakers – feel free to adapt and add your own!

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|--------------------------|---|---|
| 1) Etribos Ginecológicos | 14) Deje que sus caderas se relajen hacia la meza | 24) Deje que sus piernas caigan hacia fuera |
| 2) Cadera o cola | 15) Incline su pelvis hacia arriba | 25) Órganos reproductivos |
| 3) Tocar | 16) Acercase / Usted Puede venir | 26) Anticonceptivos / Métodos |
| 4) Vagina | 17) Échese en la mesa | 27) Planificación familiar |
| 5) Examen interno | 18) Ya esta terminando | 28) Analgésico local |
| 6) Pellizco | 19) Pinchazo | 29) Sabana |
| 7) Cólico | 20) Mesa | 30) Esta es mi mano en su muslo |
| 8) Limpiar | 21) Cama | 31) Bebe |
| 9) Relájese | 22) No se mueva | 32) Embarazo |
| 10) Control | 23) Limpiar | 33) Tejido |
| 11) Siente bien | | |
| 12) Normal | | |
| 13) Abre sus rodillas | | |

ACTIVITY:

1. Presentation with whole group: 5-10min

Offer a short didactic portion on the importance of language and word choice, particularly in abortion care. Choose one or two objectives for the session and share with the group.

Here is a potential list but feel free to write your own.

- Describe how language, tone, and touch can trigger patients, including but not limited to LGBTQ patients and/or those with trauma histories;
- Identify preferred words for use during abortion care;
- Teach learners how to watch for non-verbal cues and validate their patients' experiences;
- Help a learner adjust his/her use of triggering, stigmatizing and uncomfortable words and phrases, and be mindful that language choice can be dependent on patient and time; and
- Demonstrate how language, tone, and touch can be optimized to provide compassionate care.

On the front wall, place your 8½ x 11" papers with "patient-centered," "neutral" and "triggering/stigmatizing/uncomfortable" spacing them evenly between participants so they are reflective of the size of your group.

2. Teamwork: 15-20min

Break the room into smaller groups of 5-10 participants (depending on the size of the room and group) and distribute one stack of cards to each group. Give the groups 15-20 minutes to discuss and choose where each index card should be placed on the spectrum from patient-centered to triggering.

3. Return to larger group: Allow 5-10 min for groups to put their index cards up at the front of the room.

4. Debrief in larger group: 10-15min

Back in the larger group, ask each small group to report back on their discussions and exercise, encouraging them to think through how they will continue to teach word choice.

Example debriefing questions/prompts for the exercise:

- What do you notice about the spectrum of cards/colors/words you see on the board?
- Choose an example of a word that was placed in multiple categories (e.g. patient-centered & neutral or patient centered & triggering) and ask the groups why they chose these categories for this word.
- How might your interpretation of the connotation of a word/phrase change in various practice settings with various types of patients?
- Are there any other words/phrases your group discussed that were not written on your index cards?