

## The Medicine of Compassion

# SPECTRUM OF CARING: BARRIERS AND BUILDERS

**1: ATTENTION** – Being aware of the signs, signals and clues that indicate what is important to others.



**Along the Spectrum:** The quality of our attention ranges from being totally clueless about what is going on with people – or even shunning them – to a deeply perceptive understanding of a person’s reasons for living and healing.

Barriers to ATTENTION	Builders of ATTENTION
Your agenda – being caught up in your own feelings, opinions, needs & tasks.	Asking permission to enter the room or space, examine, treat, move, etc.
Assumptions – assuming the worst or best, or that you already know.	Giving choices - giving back a little control, for example, “Is this a good time to talk?”
Never asking questions to check that you understand	Listening deeply – hearing what they mean; hearing what they didn't say, but would like to say.
Haste – being too busy to notice much	Recognizing nonverbal signals. Imagining what’s it like to be in their shoes.
Routine – going through the motions	Noticing what is right – noticing abilities, not just disabilities.
Distractions	Being present. Being there. Following their lead.
Indifference – ignoring how people are feeling	Learning & curiosity – taking an interest in their life
As a result, without ATTENTION people feel:	As a result, with ATTENTION people feel:
Ignored	Heard
Nobody cares	Valued
Forgotten	Remembered
Unwelcome	Cared about
Uncomfortable	Understood
<i>Persona non grata</i>	Noticed

**2: ACKNOWLEDGMENT** – Letting others know that you respect and appreciate them as unique individuals.



**Along the Spectrum:** Acknowledgement ranges from an absence of respect – habitually putting people down and stealing their dignity – to reminding someone of their greatest attributes and inner resources.

Barriers to ACKNOWLEDGMENT	Builders of ACKNOWLEDGMENT
Giving advice in a way that imposes on a person.	Offering choices and asking good questions. Preserving dignity.
One-up-manship	Affirming progress
Talking down to someone, being condescending.	Recognizing abilities, qualities and strengths. Taking a genuine interest in the person; hearing his or her stories.
Invalidating the person’s feelings.	Helping people feel needed, wanted and valued. Validating feelings and concerns.
Putting people down; reciting the bad news.	Appreciation. Respect. Life-affirming conversation.
Treating a person as an inanimate object, for example, talking about the patient as if he or she were not in the room.	Talking about what’s special, important, or interesting directly to him or her.
Distraction, impatience	Being grateful for time together
As a result, without ACKNOWLEDGMENT people feel:	As a result, with ACKNOWLEDGMENT people feel:
Small	Appreciated
Inferior	Respected
Worthless	Recognized
Helpless	Ennobled
Useless	Encouraged
Nonexistent	Resourceful
Victim	Empowered

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**3: AFFECTION** – The human touch of warmth, comfort, humor and kindness.



**Along the Spectrum:** This elements ranges from a complete lack of affection, including actions that alienate and separate people, to the creation of a strong bond of friendship and camaraderie in the healing endeavor.

Barriers to AFFECTION	Builders of AFFECTION
Showing no warmth, no feelings, no empathy.	Appropriate use of touch to convey care.
Acting distant, aloof, separate	Finding common ground. Sharing your common humanity
Taking yourself too seriously	Self disclosure.
Avoiding eye contact	<i>Being with</i> rather than only “doing to” or “doing for”
Expressing pity, feeling sorry for, commiserating.	Warmth. Comfort. Kindness. Smiles!
Acting inferior or superior.	Being thoughtful and considerate. Being an equal partner in healing.
Wound too tight, uptight, irritable.	Open-heartedness, joy, good humor.
As a result, without AFFECTION people feel:	As a result, with AFFECTION people feel:
Alone	Friendship
Disconnected	Relationship
Don't belong	Belonging
Out of place	At home
Cold	Warm
Sad	Uplifted
Estranged	Included

**4: ACCEPTANCE** – Allowing things to be the way they are.



**Along the Spectrum:** This element ranges from no acceptance at all – a complete rejection of the person or situation – to an exquisite, almost mystical peace that goes beyond ordinary understanding.

Barriers to ACCEPTANCE	Builders of ACCEPTANCE
Pretending that the situation is different from the way it is. Pretending that you know the answer when you don't.	Humility & honesty. No pretenses. Being willing to say <i>I don't know</i> .
Denying or avoiding the difficult issues.	Giving permission to speak freely and express feelings. Helping people to feel safe and at ease with you.
Trying to rescue people from their problems, without helping them cope with the present situation.	Letting go of having to control the outcome.
Getting irritated, complaining, being critical, sarcastic, cynical, bitter.	Open to change. “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape.”
Blaming, finding fault	Being non-judgmental
Being indifferent, blasé – “whatever”	Cooperation. Collaboration Teamwork.
Getting defensive, taking things personally, being inflexible.	Equanimity. Non-attachment. Even-mindedness. Emotional poise. Balance.
Laying guilt	Unconditional love
Controlling or imposing your will on the person.	Empowering the person by showing support.
Being afraid of the unknown	Trust
Arrogance	Gratitude
Without ACCEPTANCE people feel:	With ACCEPTANCE people feel:
Judged	Safe
Afraid	Grateful
Unsafe	Open to the new
Defensive	Freedom to change
Despair	Can learn, grow and heal
Hopeless	Hopeful