

## Respiratory Care, Compassion and Empathy

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Respiratory care is a growing field that has changed throughout the years. As health care evolves, respiratory care and patient intervention follows suit. Technology today has advanced with enormous strides in extending life. There are some who feel we have gone overboard and there are others who feel we still have far to go. As healthcare providers, we experience these changes- first hand. Whether it is a newborn baby struggling to take the first breath-for life, OR an elderly person struggling to breathe, live and continue to experience life. These two scenarios may be different, but the struggle is the same. Let's not forget that life matters regardless of what stage we are presented with. We must make sure we do not become immune to what lays beneath the surface. Our Respiratory patients struggle with life's changes and the intimidating advanced technologies. Remember- never forget that everyone is different. Their needs, wants, feelings, beliefs, expectations and their perception of "Quality of Life" may differ from yours. Whether it is basic education, intervention, noninvasive therapeutic modalities or invasive critical care- decisions in care may be overwhelming, especially if life and expectations have changed due to declining health. They sense or feel their limitations and start to experience situations that are beyond their control. It's a struggle and it's scary. Empathy and compassion can make a difference.

Compassionate care must be the core of our practice. Compassion can make a difference in our community and help guide our patients in making an informed decision, thus allowing our patients the respect and dignity deserved. Whether we are educating on smoking cessation, pursed lip breathing or general respiratory care-intervention can help prolong progression of pulmonary disease as we help our patients with appropriate interventions of their choice for respiratory failure which may include non-invasive ventilation and/or advanced care which involves invasive ventilation.

Always remember that we are human. We have feelings, emotions and we hurt, but it is our responsibility as professionals to respect and assist our patients during their struggles. Keep in mind, they may feel unsure or scared when control starts to slip away and may become defensive or angry- Be kind, show compassion and allow them the right to decide what the next step is. They may be afraid of what the future may bring. It may not be promising- end of life. Do not forget to look, listen, accept and understand the person. Empathy can be the open door needed for patient success, progress, acceptance and peace when the time is right. As always, it is a choice- their choice, not your choice.

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