



# Graded Assertiveness.

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Graded assertiveness is a learned skill.

It is a process of communicating, advocating and directing in stressful or crisis scenarios.

There are many factors that can block good communication during critical events including:

- differences in seniority or experience
- job position
- personal power
- personal agendas
- fear of 'loss of face'
- and plain old pig-stubbornness.

One form of graded assertiveness that has been developed, can be remembered with the word PACE.

PACE consists of 4 stages or tiers of communication. Each one is a measured escalation that systematically (if the problem is not resolved) transfers power from other....to shared...and finally to self.

# **P**robe **A**lert **C**hallenge **E**mergency

Here is one example to give you some idea of PACE in action.

1. **Probe:**

“did you know that this patient has a serious allergy to Latex?”

2. **Alert:**

“I think there might be Latex in the gloves you are using. Lets just check on the box”.

3. **Challenge:**

“It is against our policy for you to do this procedure wearing Latex gloves if the patient has an allergy. You should not continue”.

4. **Emergency:**

“Step away from the patient. You will not continue with this. I am contacting my team leader immediately”.

By using the 4 stages as a guideline you have a structured momentum that empowers you to move forward despite perhaps feeling uncomfortable doing so.

In such ‘moments of crisis’ you become an advocate for your patient, your colleagues or yourself.

# A template for raising concerns:

Another tool that will help during graded assertiveness is to develop a structured template *ahead of time* that you can mentally access when you need to communicate a plan for engaging with problems or issues.

Here is such an example:

1. **Attention:** "Excuse me John...."
2. **State your concern:** "I notice from your fluid balance chart that the man in bed 6 has not had any output from his IDC in the last 2 hours."
3. **State the problem as you see it:** "I think this man is deteriorating, and we need to have him reviewed."
4. **State a solution:** "I will phone doctor Kumar to come and review him urgently".
5. **Obtain an agreement:** "Does that sound OK to you?"

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## REFERENCE:

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