

Podcast Transcript: Compassion

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Hello, I'm Dave Bilan, Interim Vice President Collaborative Practice, Nursing & Health Professions with Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Welcome to the discussion on the proposed value of compassion.

Our values guide our actions, how we 'walk the talk' and, at the core, how we interact with patients, families and with each other.

As we think about the AHS vision – *Healthy Albertans. Healthy Communities. Together.* – we need to ensure our values bring our vision to life.

We define compassion as remembering that caring is as important as care. That compassion is the highest calling to provide comfort and empathy to those who are in need. Compassion's literal meaning is 'to suffer together.' It's the feeling one develops when you see someone else suffering or in distress and you feel motivated to relieve the suffering or distress. Compassion is what binds us together in the health care provider community.

Compassion is providing the best care. It's about treating patient and family members with sensitivity and empathy. It's about treating each other with that same sensitivity and care.

I think it's safe to assume we have all experienced a time when we needed compassion. Sometimes it's listening, tuning out everything else and truly listening.

I recently lost my mother, who made it to 95, and she had relatively good health until the last few months of her life. She was admitted to hospital in late November and was diagnosed with a condition that had a very poor prognosis.

After two weeks in the acute care facility, she and our family made the decision to have her enter a hospice facility. The care that my mother received and the

support that our family was offered by the physicians and staff in that facility was amazing. I would definitely describe the care that she received as compassionate.

The manner in which those individuals involved in her care, from the nursing staff, health care aids, physicians, pharmacists, social workers, dietary staff and volunteers, was exemplary. It started with listening to my mother or a family member to understand what her needs were and then taking action to address them. Our family was very moved by the care that my mother received – at a time that she needed care, understanding and compassion the most.

Everyone is worthy of compassion. The ability to understand another's feelings and to help in a way that meets their needs is compassion.

In our new Professional Practice in Action, one of the pillars is “I Care” – I Care about how I interact with patients, how I convey compassionate, empathetic care through listening, learning from, and coaching patients and families. It's also about self-awareness and making sure you care for yourself.

As health care workers, this sometimes is our biggest struggle. One of my approaches to self-care is ‘self talk.’ I have found that self talk, depending on the messages you send yourself, can be very uplifting or very negative. So it's important to filter out the negative thoughts and consciously embrace the positive aspects of your experiences.

It's important not to get down on you and to seek the support of colleagues and friends during tough times. Seek out those who show compassion to others and to you.

I recognize the impact my wellbeing has on my relationships and work life. By fostering respectful, constructive interactions, and celebrating other's successes, I do my best to be compassionate to others and to myself.

I would like to open up the conversation to all of you, what does compassion mean to you? How do you display compassion?