

Self-care and communication strategies for COVID-19 screening stations

COVID-19 worker supports

Many things impact our mental health and resiliency. Self-care helps us to recognize our emotions better, show kindness to others, and communicate effectively in difficult times. The strategies in this document can help you communicate safely with people.

Empathy is communicating the message, “You’re not alone. We are in this together.”

Self-care

Self-care is having compassion for yourself and taking actions to reduce stress and improve your wellness. Self-care is important for building resiliency. Consider these self-care strategies:

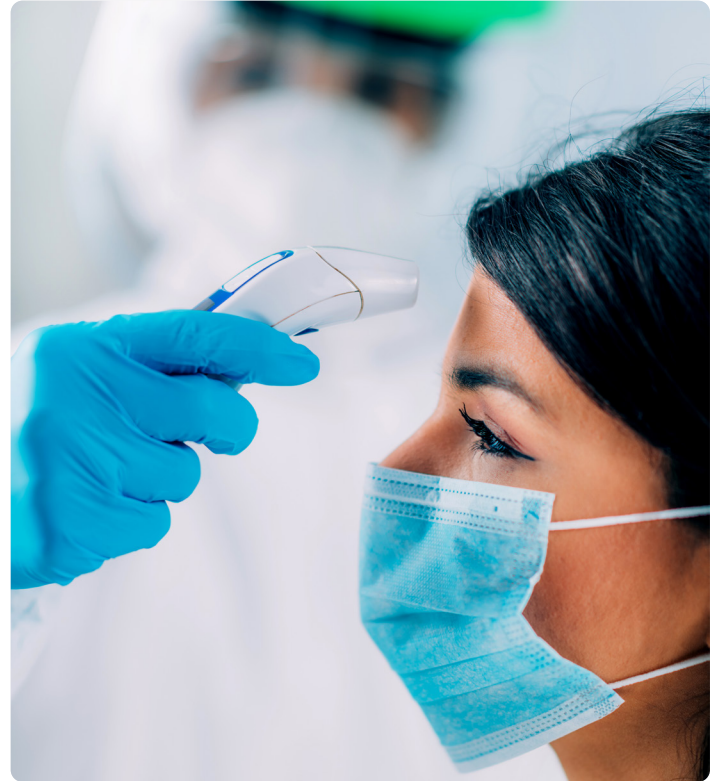
- **Take a few minutes** to take care of you.
- When you start to feel overwhelmed, take a break.
- Share your feelings with co-workers or your leader after stressful situations.

Communication strategies

Patients/clients, families and visitors may feel stressed or scared when they arrive at your screening table. Unfortunately, you may be required to give them other disappointing information. While we can’t control how people feel, how we speak to them can make a difference.

Tips for a better encounter

- Be aware of the physical space around you. Know where your exits are. Notice any potential safety hazards.
- Be aware of your body language. Make eye contact with each person. Smile—even if you are wearing a mask.
- Be friendly. Introduce yourself warmly and with confidence.
- Be sensitive. As the first point of contact share information in a kind and compassionate way.
- If there is a concern, ask open-ended questions. (e.g., Can you tell me more about why you are here?)
- Show empathy. Use the scripts below when explaining the COVID safety protocols.



3 steps for staying safe:

1. **Communicate effectively:**

- **Validate** how they are feeling
- **Relate** to what they are experiencing
- **Collaborate** for safety

Review the scripts on the following page.

2. **Use a team approach:**

- **Know** your role as the screener or a team member.

Review roles in the table on the following page.

3. **Call for help if you feel unsafe**

Call Protective Services (1-888-999-3770) or use your local emergency response protocol (e.g. Code White).

Communication scripts

Step 1: Validate

“It can be hard not being able to be physically together.”
“This is a challenging time.”
“I understand that the changes can be upsetting.”
“This is really hard. It is okay to feel frustrated.”

Step 2: Relate

“That sounds really difficult. I can see why you’re feeling that way.”
“I hear you are feeling _____ because _____. I’d like to see what we can do to make this easier for you.”
“The [yelling/swearing/etc.] is making it hard for me to assist you, and makes me and others feel unsafe.”

Step 3: Collaborate

“I hear your concerns. Tell me more so I can see if I can assist.”
“When you have stopped [yelling/swearing] and I feel safe to do so, I will continue to assist you with this.”
“Our discussion will go better if we both feel safe and speak calmly, with respect.”

Roles for a team approach

The screener and the team both play important roles in resolving conflict with an upset visitor.

If you are the Screener

Know what is happening

Notice your emotions. Take breaths to stay calm.
Be aware of your position and posture.
Notice changes in the other person’s body language, facial expression, words and tone.

Take safe action

Act confidently and build rapport.
Speak calmly with a pleasant tone.
Maintain eye contact and listen actively.
Use the scripts above to show empathy.
Reinforce safety protocols in a respectful way.
Be aware of and share other visitation options.
Seek answers to questions in a timely manner.
If the other person is upset, move to a safe area.
Trust your instincts. Ask for help if you feel unsafe.

If you are a Team Member

Know what is happening

What do you notice about the visitor’s physical and emotional state?
What do you notice about the safety of the environment? (e.g., tripping hazards, easy access to remove yourself and others)
Wait for instruction from the screener, being mindful you may be required to take action.

Take safe action

Address immediate safety concerns and reduce stimulation by removing chairs, people or objects.
Stand nearby, within eyesight of your co-worker and the other person, so the speaker knows they are not alone.
Do not interrupt or try to take over.
If the other person is upset, help the screener move the conversation to a quiet area or remove others to create space.
Be familiar with your local emergency response protocol.

Report all incidents in MySafetyNet. If you need guidance or have any additional concerns, follow up with your leadership.

Post-incident self-care strategy:

It is normal to feel some stress and anxiety during and after difficult conversations. It is important to acknowledge these reactions and practice self-care to help cope. Seek support if necessary.

Before going home have a conversation with your fellow screening station team members.

- **Take the time to check in** with each other.
- **Ask:** “How are you after that? Are you doing okay?”
- **Remind** them of the many Resilience, Wellness, and Mental Health Resources available on [Insite](#).
- **Remember** you are helping to keep everyone safe. What you do is important. You matter!