After reading this chapter, the reader will be prepared to:

- Describe the various components of communication.
- Discuss the importance of communication in the therapeutic setting.
- Recognize some of the barriers to communication.
- Discuss some strategies and techniques for effective communication.
- Apply effective strategies to challenging encounters.
- Discuss team communication strategies.
- Manage conflict through communication.

“People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

—Teddy Roosevelt

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

—George Bernard Shaw

---

**COMMUNICATION: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Communication is something that we do all day every day; even without talking, we are often communicating! As a health care practitioner, good communication becomes even more critical. Good communication provides the underpinnings for all of our clinical encounters. Effective communication has been shown to enhance patient satisfaction, patient adherence, and patient health outcomes; it also prevents medical errors and decreases malpractice lawsuits. Without good communication skills, you will have difficulty obtaining a patient history, determining an accurate diagnosis, or making effective recommendations that your patient will follow. Communication is what will enable you to develop a therapeutic relationship and to engage your patients as true partners in their own health. In addition, effective communication is not only essential for interacting with patients and their families, but also for working in multidisciplinary teams and managing workplace conflicts.

So, what is communication, and what makes it effective? Pollozhani et al define communication as an “interactional process which occurs in an environment where people share meaning verbally and non-verbally.” It is not simply a matter of transmitting information, but rather requires the reciprocal interaction of all of those involved in the process—both giving and receiving information. This may remind you of the concepts of intention and impact that were discussed in Chapter 1. As you know, it is important to recognize that communication is much more than simply what we say. The following are 3 components to any message being communicated:

1. **Verbal messages**: What you say (eg, the words you choose, the jargon that is used)