COMMUNICATION CAPSULE

THE ANGRY PATIENT

Physicians rate 15% of patient-physician encounters as "difficult"

SAFETY FIRST

To ensure safety:
- Move to be between patient and the exit
- Call for or move to a space with other staff present
- Call security or 911

DEESCALATE THE ANGER

ACKNOWLEDGE, APOLOGIZE, AGREE

By acknowledging, apologizing or expressing that you agree, you validate what the patient is feeling. As you do this, be cognizant of your own emotional response. Remain calm.

PAUSE

Walking to a different location can help the patient settle down and reengage prefrontal and cortex functioning. Do not ask the patient to "calm down" as this is likely to be more upsetting.

EXPLAIN, EMPATHIZE, EXPECTATIONS

If the patient has settled down, they maybe be able to process information and have a conversation. Be concise and clear.

If you tried to deescalate the situation unsuccessfully, sometimes moving forward is the best approach

"I do want to help you with x, let’s talk about how we can make some progress here"