

Effective Communication

IN HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

SPIKES is an acronym used to provide a framework for healthcare professionals who need to present distressing information to patients and families. Each letter is a step in the sequence.

The SPIKES strategy includes demonstrating empathy, validating feelings, exploring the patient/family's understanding, and providing information.

In hospice and palliative care, the framework can be helpful in presenting a new diagnosis as well as in discussing worsening conditions or a change in status.



SETTING

Choose a private and comfortable setting.
Sit and remove any objects between you.
Include significant others.

PERCEPTION

Ask the patient/family how much they know or understand about their condition.
Analyze the response and the level of understanding.

INVITATION

Ask if it's okay to talk more about the role of palliative care.
Discover what they want to know and what they don't want to hear.

KNOWLEDGE

Share your knowledge, avoiding jargon.
Adjust language as needed.
Confirm understanding, responding to questions or concerns throughout.

EXPLORE EMOTIONS

Maintain eye contact.
Identify the emotions being expressed.
Empathize.

SUMMARIZE

Summarize information given and received.
Ask if there are any more questions.
Outline next steps.
Set a time to follow up.

