



By Dike Drummond MD, CEO and Founder TheHappyMD.com

Lower your stress with simple doctor-patient communication skills ...

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"
~ Theodore Roosevelt

The Universal Upset Patient Protocol (UUPP)

A single encounter with an upset person can ruin your whole day and leave you ruminating on what you might have done differently for weeks. Here is a simple script to take the stress and confusion out of dealing with upset people in any area of your life.

You have probably not been taught how to deal with upset people effectively -- so when you find yourself faced with an upset person you most likely do one of the two things that will make it worse

- Defend yourself or the person who upset them
- Try to "solve their problem"

These are natural human instincts and they NEVER WORK.

Here is a COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL that gives you a simple, structured series of questions and phrases to deal with the upset person quickly, easily, empathetically and with elegance and grace.

The Key is "FEELINGS FIRST"

In any conversation with an upset person they need to express their feelings first -- before you will be able to discuss anything else. They are longing to be heard and understood, for someone to care about their situation.

- Our job is to give them an opportunity to do that right up front ... just as soon as we realize they are upset.
- THEN we empathize and come to an agreement on what to do next.

If you defend yourself or the person who upset them ... it is literally like pouring gasoline on a fire. You will end up with hurt feelings, long delays as you untangle your conversation and you will feel as if you have failed (again) in this difficult interaction.

When you use the UUPP - you will be pleasantly surprised at how quickly the upset person calms down and how easy it is for you to hold your center. These may turn out to be your favorite conversations from now on because it is so simple to help the patient feel so much better.

[CLICK HERE for the UUPP Video Training](#)

The Universal Upset Patient Protocol

Step 1) You find yourself facing an upset person.

This person can be a patient, however the UUPP works for patients, co-workers, colleagues, your significant other, children and even complete strangers. Breathe, stick to the script below and see how it instantly defuses what used to be very difficult encounters.

NOTE:

The UUPP works no matter who or what the person is upset about. It works if they are upset AT YOU, your nurse, the office, their husband, the tax man ... it doesn't matter. The UUPP works every time.

Regardless what/who they are upset with ... the upset usually comes in one of two flavors.

- The person is openly and verbally upset. It is obvious and they are obvious about it.
- The person is upset and NOT talking. They are "seething". You can tell it clearly by their body language and they are not saying anything about it. DO NOT ignore their obvious non-verbal signals. You will waste a lot of time and energy unless you use the UUPP with these people too.

Step 2) Say ... "You sound/look really upset."

Step 3) The upset person will say one of two things

"You bet I am"

Or

"No I'm not ... I am ANGRY/FRUSTRATED/HURT/SAD/FURIOUS."

They may name a different emotion. There is a part of you that will think you have "made a mistake" here. You didn't name the right emotion! Just let that go. The simple act of you commenting on their upset ... caused them to look inside and clarify exactly what they were feeling. That clarification is the first start of them venting and moving forward.

Step 4) You say, "Tell me about it." or "Tell me what happened."

The upset person does not usually hesitate given your invitation. They will take right off into an emotion filled description of what happened. Your job here is simple ... LISTEN. Really listen. Look to understand their viewpoint here. Muster up as much empathy as you can. Help them "get it all out of their system".

**Step 5) When they are all done ... look them in the eyes and say,
"I am so sorry that happened to you" or "I am so sorry you feel this way".**

Step 6) Ask, "What would you like me to do to help you?"

Most of the time, the upset person will have a specific request. Listen carefully as they make it and notice whether or not you are willing to do what they want you to. This is your opportunity to notice your boundaries for the next step.

Some of the time the upset person will be done here. They simply wanted to be heard and are done now. Thank them for trusting you with their feelings - see step 8 below. You can move on to your clinical issues at this point with a clean slate.

Step 7) Tell them what you suggest be done now.

If the upset person has asked you to take a specific action - and you are willing to do it - tell them so.

If the upset person's request is NOT something you are willing to do - set your boundaries and communicate them clearly. Tell them you are NOT willing to do what they request and do not stop there. Think about what you are willing to do that will address their upset and tell them what you ARE willing instead. Ask if your proposal works for them. It usually only takes a minute or two to come to an agreement here.

**Step 8) Thank the upset person for being open with you,
"Thank you for telling me how you really feel ... it is important to me that we be
understand each other clearly".**

Step 9) MOVE ON

You have now effectively "cleared the air" with this patient and you can move on to the clinical reasons for their visit today.

Even though the full UUPP above has 9 steps, the whole protocol conversation may take only 2-4 minutes

IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE UUPP - and either try to defend or fix the problem up front -- you are in for a 20 minute kerfuffle every time ... because people really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Here's the UUPP again in bullets

- "You look really upset"
- "Tell me about it"
- "I am so sorry that happened to you / you feel that way"
- "What would you like me to do to help you"
- "Here's what I suggest we do next"
- "Thanks for telling me how you are really feeling"

NEXT STEPS:

PRACTICE - PRACTICE - PRACTICE

- Print out this document
- Study it
- Grab a friend who will help you practice by playing the part of the upset person
- PRACTICE until you are comfortable with the steps and phrases
- **USE THE UUPP WITH YOUR NEXT UPSET PERSON**

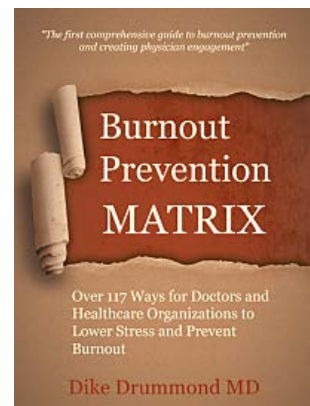
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The UUPP is just one Burnout Prevention Tool. Here are even more options ...

1) Get your copy of the Burnout Prevention

MATRIX Report Over 117 ways physicians and organizations can work together to prevent burnout

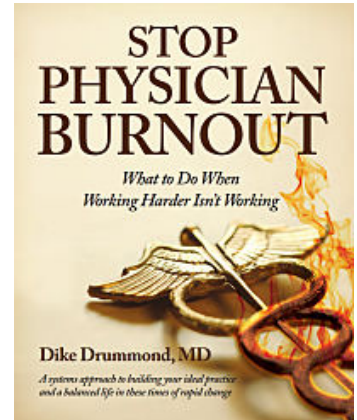
[Click Here](#) to learn more and download your copy



2) Buy the book: "Stop Physician Burnout – what to do when working harder isn't working"

This is the first step-by-step reference text to burnout prevention for the practicing doctor. It is a complete system to build a more Ideal Practice and a much more Balanced Life.

[Click Here to learn more and get your copy](#) – including an additional 6 Power Tools at the website.



3) Visit TheHappyMD.com for additional resources and tools so you can be a HappyMD

- Stress Management and Burnout Treatment and Prevention
- Physician Leadership Development
- Physician Wellness and Engagement Resources

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That's all for now. Keep breathing and have a great rest of your day,



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