

Take the H.E.A.T.

H

Hear them out

WHAT TO DO or SAY

- Do not assume you understand why they are upset. Give them the opportunity to share their frustrations.
- Demonstrate that you are actively listening to them by asking probing questions such as:
 - ▶ “When/where did this happen?”
 - ▶ “Who was involved?”
- Demonstrate your understanding by paraphrasing back to them.
- Stay calm and patient.

E

Empathize

WHAT TO DO or SAY

- Focus on their feelings. Respectfully acknowledge their feelings and opinions.
- Use statements like:
 - ▶ “I would be (concerned/ unhappy, etc.) too if... (fill in the blank) happened to me.”
 - ▶ “That had to be a (difficult/ challenging, etc.) experience to (go through/have to deal with).”

A

Apologize

WHAT TO DO or SAY

- **Simply saying “I am sorry” can go a long way.**
- Communicate with sincerity.
- Be genuine and avoid overly apologizing as this can be perceived as patronizing.
- Use statements like:
 - ▶ “I am sorry you had that experience.”
 - ▶ “We appreciate you bringing this to our attention and giving us the opportunity to (assist you/make it right, etc.).”

T

Take action

WHAT TO DO or SAY

- It is important not to get defensive or take it personally.
- Focus on the issue and how you can help to resolve the concern or need.
- Take responsibility to follow-up or report the issue.
- Ask the patient about their desired outcome and work within policy and/or regulation to address it.

Follow through. You may need to enlist the help of others in the organization to assist the patient. If you or someone else will be following up with them later set appropriate expectations on when that will occur.