

**The human stuff: managing conversations with families and colleagues at a challenging time.** Get in touch: [info@medicalmediation.org.uk](mailto:info@medicalmediation.org.uk)

Health professionals work under stress and have difficult conversations with patients and families all the time. Now it's not just families and patients who are frightened and living with uncertainty. We all are. That makes the way we talk to each other more important than ever.

Just because we're living through a challenging time doesn't mean the way we communicate has to be challenging or confrontational. Here are some tips to keep talking like human beings when the going gets tough.

1. Acknowledge and accept that the conversations you may have to have with families, patients and colleagues may be more difficult than ever before.
2. If you're frightened, acknowledge that to yourself and remember others are likely to be feeling the same. Try to avoid a "my stress is worse than yours" response.
3. When people are frightened they sometimes communicate in what feels like a confrontational way. If someone talks to you angrily or aggressively, try to step into their shoes and remind yourself that they are probably just anxious, frightened or upset. Just as you may be.
4. If someone communicates with us face to face or remotely in a way which makes us feel attacked, our instinct is to respond defensively. This is completely natural but not always helpful. Try to pause, breathe and respond calmly and kindly. This isn't always easy but it's worth it.
5. If you have to ask someone to do something differently because of the current situation, make sure you ask them politely and kindly. Try not to **sound** as if you're giving orders even if you are!
6. If you've been re-deployed to work in a different area eg from paediatrics to adult services, don't be afraid say "I'm new here, please explain what you want me to do."
7. Equally, if you're managing colleagues who have been redeployed, treat them with kindness and respect. You are probably feeling just as anxious as they are.
8. If someone around you is being negative, try not to respond negatively. Negativity fuels negativity. That can pull everyone down.
9. Remembering to **listen to others** when everyone is under stress can be difficult but listening well and responding with kindness has never been more important. We are all human and the more humanely we communicate with each other, the easier it will be to get through this.