

# TOP 10

## Tips for Teaching Communication to Residents



An educational resource  
brought to you by Margie  
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How do you teach a doctor to have good interpersonal style and to effectively communicate with patients, colleagues and staff? It's the tough stuff of the competencies that most assume is easy. Here are a few tips to go beyond traditional lecture and make this critical skill a bit easier to teach.

**1 Think Outside the Box.** Communication skills far exceed those needed for patient care. To be well-rounded physicians, residents should know how to communicate with others in a variety of settings and situations.

**2 Don't Be a Bore.** Make sure your curriculum on interpersonal and communication skills goes beyond a traditional once-per-year lecture.

**3 Don't Forget Observation and Evaluation.** Assign faculty members as mentors for learning activities. The faculty member should observe the resident, evaluate their performance, and provide performance feedback.

**4 Feedback is Key.** One-on-one discussions with residents regarding their performance on an interpersonal and communication skill learning activity are essential for professional growth and development!

**5 Residents Will Follow Faculty Lead.** Modeling is an important component of behavioral learning. Encourage faculty to practice effective communication and appropriate interpersonal interaction and expect residents to emulate it.

**6 So Get Faculty Involved!** Encouraging educators to learn about communication skills helps them know how to model it, understand how to teach it, and know what to expect from residents.

**7 Identify Interested Leaders.** There may be faculty in your department or educators in your institution with passion and experience in training others on effective communication. Enlist their help so that their excitement will spread.

**8 Focus on Style.** Increase resident self-awareness by discussing behavioral styles and individual factors important to interpersonal exchange.

**9 Variety, Variety, Variety!** Use different learning experiences to teach this competency. Varying the activities from workshops to live observation can ensure residents are putting what they learn into practice.

**10 Change Your Approach and Change Your Residents.** If you want residents to view interpersonal and communication patterns as an important part of their professional practice, you must make it a valued part of their training. Increase the time and attention for communication skills in the curriculum and residents will respond.

### Join Partners® for a NEW Webinar featuring Guest Speaker...Dr. Penni L. Smith.

Written by:  
**Penni L. Smith, PhD**



Guest Speaker & Licensed Psychologist  
Director of Education & Assistant Professor  
Department of Anesthesiology  
University of Mississippi Medical Center

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#### Meet Dr. Smith. . .

Dr. Smith brings a unique blend of experiences related to interpersonal and communication skills as a licensed psychologist and as faculty in the department of anesthesiology. Her predoctoral internship in clinical psychology and postdoctoral fellowship in health psychology, coupled with real-world success teaching residents to communicate effectively with patients, fellow doctors and ancillary staff, make her approach usable and relatable.

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