



# Relationship-Centered Care

Relationship-Centered Care (RCC) can be defined as care in which patients, families and healthcare providers appreciate the importance of their relationships with one another. In RCC, the patient is the central concern, but is not considered in isolation of all others. The staff is mindful of the contribution of the family, the care team, their organizations and the community.

RCC involves the following principles:

1. Relationships in healthcare ought to include dimensions of personhood as well as roles.
  - Both the patient and providers are unique individuals with their own sets of experiences, values and perspectives.
  - Providers remain aware of their own emotions, reactions and biases and monitor their own behavior.
2. Affect and emotion are important components of relationships in healthcare.
  - Providers should not be detached.
  - Providers are encouraged to empathize with the patient, as it may help patients to experience and express their emotions thereby helping staff understand and serve the patient's needs and improve the patient's experience.
3. All healthcare relationships occur in the context of reciprocal influence.
  - Health and health-related actions do not occur in isolation but are related to one another.
  - Acknowledges that the providers also benefit from serving the patient.
4. The formation and maintenance of genuine relationships in healthcare is morally valuable.
  - Humans are more morally committed to those whom they are in a personal relationship with.
  - As a human participant, the provider behaves more genuinely than if he/she were acting out a role.

## Outcomes of Relationship-Centered Care (RCC)

The anticipated outcomes of RCC include:

- increased patient engagement in their care;
- patients feel honored, respected and satisfied with care;
- patients have lower anxiety and a higher degree of trust in providers;
- a greater agreement on treatment plans and increased adherence to treatment;
- a better understanding of their illness and informed decision making adds depth to the interaction;
- provider becomes support for the patient and the patient becomes source of professional gratification;
- decreased provider burn-out.

Source: Beach, M., Inui, T., and the Relationship-Centered Care Research Network. *Relationship-Centered Care, A Constructive Reframing.*, *J Gen Intern Med.* 2006 Jan; 21(Suppl 1): S3-S8.

After discussing the principles of relationship-centered care with your team, review the A.R.T. (Ask-Respond-Tell) of Communication as a strategy to incorporate RCC into your clinic's workflow.



## The A.R.T. of Relationship-Centered Care (RCC)

Good communication is essential to providing relationship-centered care.

RCC recognizes reciprocal influence between patients/staff; acknowledges the importance of affect and emotion on relationships; and emphasizes genuineness in relationships.

The A.R.T. (Ask-Respond-Tell) technique can help providers to effectively communicate and build their relationships to improve patient and staff satisfaction and outcomes.

Source: "Academy of Communication in Healthcare." ACH, [www.ACHonline.org/](http://www.ACHonline.org/). Accessed 16 Nov. 2023.

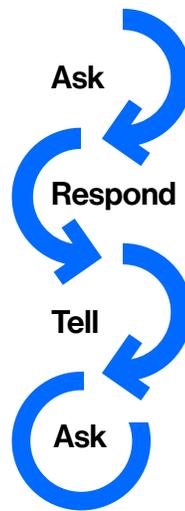
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## Using A.R.T. for RCC



**Ask** for the other's perspective (Give time to answer and don't interrupt). "We need to review your medications to make sure they are still working for you. What medications do you take and what do you take them for?"

**Respond** with empathy (See PEARLS below). "Managing all your medicines can be overwhelming and confusing, but they are all important to your health. We want to support you and will work together to find a plan."

**Tell** your perspective. "Understanding why you take all your medications is important. Keeping a current list of your medications can help you talk about them with your doctor."

**Ask** "What are some things you can do to keep track of your medications and help you take them as prescribed by your doctor?"

### A.R.T. Loops

- Turns monologue into dialogue
- Elicit patient preferences, goals and barriers
- Ensures clarity and maximizes adherence

### Use A.R.T to Summarize and Clarify Teachback

**Ask** the patient to summarize. "I've spoken a lot: can you tell me in your own words what we've decided on? Or "When you speak with your family member, what will you tell them we discussed?"

**Respond:** "Sounds like a good summary."

**Tell** additional points, as needed.

### Respond with Empathy

**Partnership:** "Let's work on this together."

**Emotion:** "You say you're frustrated."

**Apology & Appreciation:** "I'm sorry that I upset you." Respect: "I give you a lot of credit for getting through this as you have."

**Legitimization:** "Most people in your position would feel this same way."

**Support:** "I'm going to stick with you through this."