

MODULE 3: WHY PATIENTS GET ANGRY —



PATIENTS TYPICALLY LASH OUT WHEN THEY HAVE A PROBLEM OR NEED HELP

When patients lash out, you might feel defensive—and that's normal. Bearing the brunt of a patient's wrath doesn't feel good, and you don't deserve it. But usually, patients aren't trying to be difficult or unpleasant for no reason.

Understanding **why** a patient is lashing out can give you perspective and help you approach a challenging interaction with patience and empathy. Let's look at some of the reasons patients get upset when calling or visiting our practice.



SERVICE, CARE OR SUPPORT PROBLEM

- Difficult to get through on the phones without a hold time
- Wait times for Doctor when visiting clinic
- Waiting for authorization for an MRI or the next treatment step
- Insurance not accepted or pre-verification not completed in time
- Appointment booking errors including an appointment with wrong doctor who does not treat that body part

SOMETIMES THESE PROBLEMS ARE AMPLIFIED

BY THINGS WE CAN'T CONTROL

- **External Pressures**
- **Personal Struggles**





EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Imagine that you just found out that your house needed a new roof. Later that day, you visit your Doctor and find out that there was a mistake on your insurance which will cost you some money. Feel the financial pressure? External pressures include

- A patient needing to recover quickly to get back to a job they can't afford to be away from
- Time pressure to take care of family
- New injury interrupted seriously-needed home DIY project



PERSONAL STRUGGLES UNRELATED TO YOU

Keep in mind that we don't know what's going on in a patient's life. It's unfair, but patients may project their **personal problems** or struggles on you.

For example, a patient may be dealing with:

- Pain and Immobility
- Other general Health issues
- Loss of a loved one
- Family conflicts
- Career setbacks or struggles

SUMMARY

Dealing with angry patients can put you on guard and dampen your enthusiasm to help. But did you know that anger is often a secondary or “protective” emotion?

ANGER SOMETIMES MASKS AN UNDERLYING EMOTION

You can think of anger as a shield that masks more troubling emotions, such as fear or anxiety.

Knowing this and after reviewing this top 5 reasons patients get angry, can you see how a patient displaying angry behavior might actually be feeling as follows?

- ✓ Powerless
- ✓ Afraid or anxious
- ✓ Disappointed or let down
- ✓ Misinformed
- ✓ Disrespected or ignored

According to:

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

If serious mental illness or substance abuse is the issue, then your goal shifts ...

- Sometimes anger might not be caused by an underlying emotion
- A person may not be displaying 'healthy' anger but may be under the influence of a substance or is mentally ill
- In this case they may not respond to normal de-escalation steps
- We'll learn how to deal with these situations in a later lesson

IN THE NEXT MODULE

- ✓ LEARN DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES TO CALM HEALTHY ANGER
- ✓ UNDERSTAND 'OUTSIDE OF DE-ESCALATION' WHEN DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES ARE NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS YOU WOULD LIKE