

V.A.L.U.E. Mnemonic for Family Communication

Enhancing understanding and
connection within families

The VALUE mnemonic was developed by the University of Washington End-of-Life Care Research Program. Used for educational purposes under fair use. Original resource: <http://depts.washington.edu/eolcare/pubs/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/value-card.doc>



V.A.L.U.E. Mnemonic Overview

Introduction to V.A.L.U.E.



Structured Communication Framework

V.A.L.U.E. is a five-step mnemonic improving communication between healthcare providers and families in critical care.

Core Components

The mnemonic stands for

Value	comments made by the family
Acknowledge	family emotions
Listen	actively
Understand	the patient as a person
Elicit	family questions

Building Trust and Empathy

Following V.A.L.U.E. fosters trust, reduces misunderstandings, and supports informed family decisions.

Use in End-of-Life Care

The approach is critical in end-of-life discussions where clarity and compassion are essential.

Step-by-Step Breakdown

V - Value comments made by the family



Recognizing Family Input

Actively acknowledge and affirm the observations and contributions from family members.

Critical Family Insights

Family provides essential information about patient preferences, history, personality and wishes.

Building Therapeutic Alliance

Valuing family comments fosters respect, inclusivity, and strengthens care relationships.

Encouraging Open Communication

Listening without judgment validates the family's role and promotes positive interactions.

A - Acknowledge family emotions

Recognize and Validate Emotions

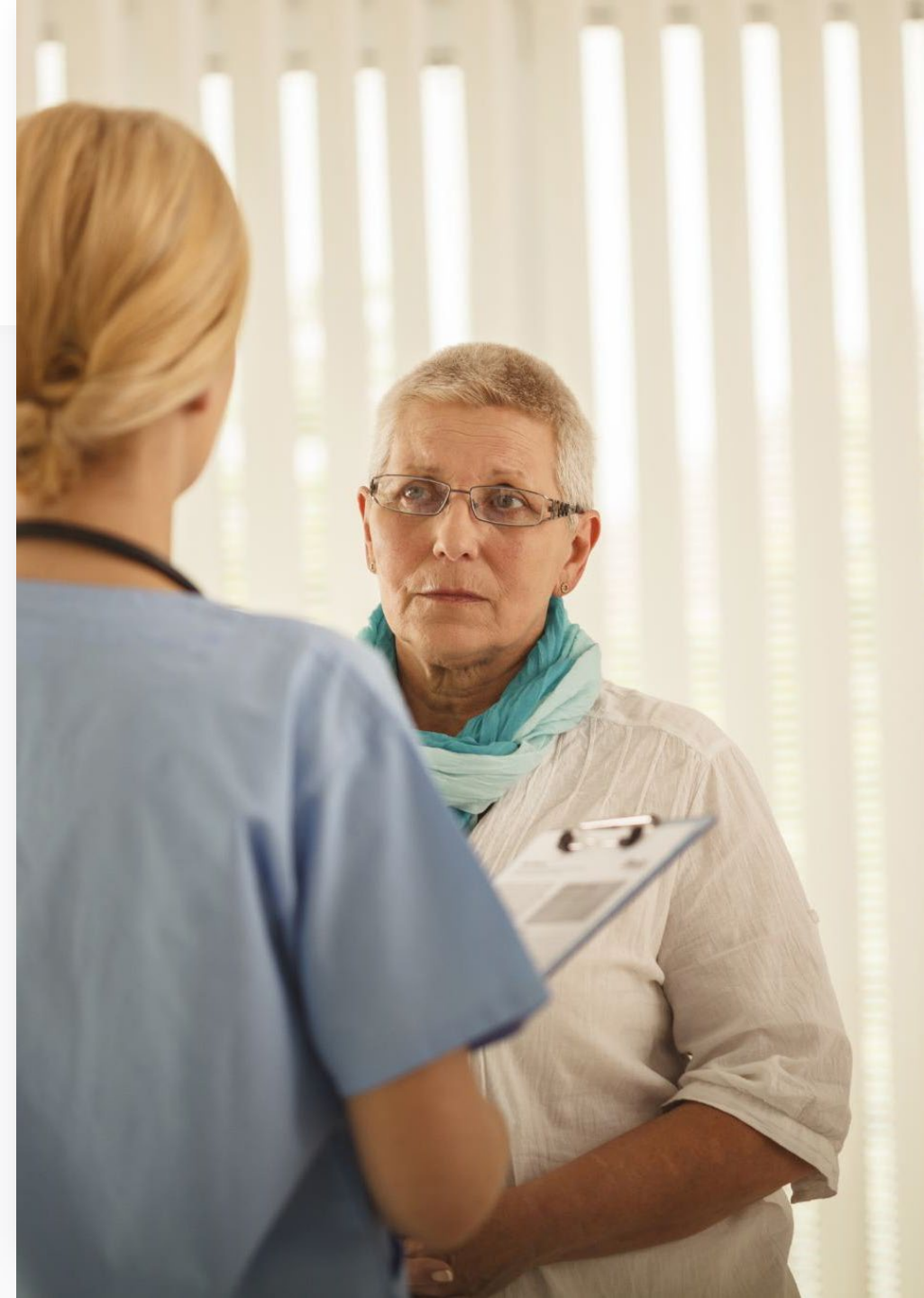
Clinicians should identify and validate family emotions like fear and sadness without dismissing them.

Use Reflective Listening

Employ reflective listening and empathetic statements to convey understanding and support.

Create Safe Communication Space

Acknowledging emotions fosters a safe space for families to express concerns and enables collaborative decisions.





L - Listen

Active Listening Essentials

Active listening requires being fully present and understanding both words and emotions behind communication.

Communication Techniques

Avoiding interruptions and using open body language signals respect and fosters engagement with families.

Empowering Families

Listening demonstrates respect, clarifies misunderstandings, and empowers families in patient-centered care.

U - Understand the patient as a person



Holistic Patient Understanding

Recognizing patients' values and life stories helps tailor care beyond clinical symptoms.

Personalized Care Planning

Aligning care plans with patient identity and goals improves relevance and dignity in treatment.

Empathy in Healthcare

Understanding patients fosters empathy, enhancing meaningful and respectful care decisions.

Family Inclusion and Respect

Seeing patients as whole persons reassures families and supports dignity in end-of-life care.



E - Elicit family questions

Importance of Eliciting Questions

Eliciting family questions ensures clarity, engagement, and addresses concerns in emotionally charged situations.

Creating Comfortable Environment

Clinicians should invite questions and foster an environment where families feel safe to express doubts.

Promoting Shared Decision-Making

Engaging families in question-asking reinforces their role in care and supports collaborative decisions.

Reference

- Lautrette, A., Darmon, M., Megarbane, B., et al. (2007). A communication strategy and brochure for relatives of patients dying in the ICU. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2 (5):469-78. (PDF, 197 KB).
<https://www.doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa063446>
- While the title refers to dying in the ICU, authors suggest VALUE is beneficial as a broad communication strategy