

# Essentials in Communication skills & Breaking bad news

**Dr. Santosh Chaturvedi, MD, FRCPsych (UK)**

Consultant Psychiatrist, Jagadguru Kripalu Chikitsalaya

Vrindavan, Barsana and Mangarh, Uttar Pradesh

Former, Dean & Senior Professor of Psychiatry

National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences, Bangalore

# Why communication skill is important?

- Healthcare professionals with good communication skills identify patients' problems more accurately
- Their patients adjust better psychologically
- Patients are more satisfied with their care
- Healthcare professionals with good communication skills have greater job satisfaction and less work stress

# Main reasons for communication with patients

- Eliciting
  - (a) the patient's main problems;
  - (b) the patient's perceptions of these; and
  - (c) the physical, emotional, and social impact of the patient's problems on the patient and family
- Providing information about what the patients want to know; checking their understanding
- Eliciting the patient's reactions to the information given and their main concerns

# Purpose of communication with patients

- Determining how much the patient wants to participate in decision making (when treatment options are available)
- Discussing treatment options so that the patient understands the implications
- Maximising the chance that the patient will follow agreed decisions about treatment and advice about changes in lifestyle

# What makes a communication difficult?

- We don't know the absolute answer.
- We know the answer, but don't know how to tell it.
- We know the answer, and know how to tell it but don't know how to handle the reactions.
- We know the answer, and know how to tell it and know how to handle the reactions, but feel bad of having upset the person.
- When the patient shares what was told by another professional.
- When patient brings up google information.
- When there is a difference of opinion.

# Making difficult conversations easy !

- Let the patient talk ....
- Listen
- Give cues, explore, reflect and empathise
- Non verbal communication – hmmm
- Do not assume, which can make an ASS-U-ME.
- First listen, understand what is being asked, and respond.

# Listening is the key skill

- Active listening
- How to listen
- How to know if patient is listening
- How to make patient listen to you
- Listening is therapeutic and satisfying

# Non-verbal communication

Look for signs of non verbal communication

- Eyes, eye contact, distraction, drooping
- Eye contact – too much or too less or different
- Lips and its movements
- Body posture
- Limbs
- Hands and fingers
- Body movements, motor restlessness
- Other individual variations



# Reasons for patients not disclosing problems

- Belief that nothing can be done
- Do not want to burden the doctor
- Desire not to seem weak or ungrateful
- Concern that it is not appropriate to mention them
- Worry that their fears of what is wrong with them will be confirmed
- Healthcare professionals' blocking behaviour

# Blocking behaviour

- Offering premature advice
- Offering premature reassurance
- Explaining away distress as ‘normal’
- Attending to physical aspects only
- Switching the topic
- “Jolly” patients along
- Asking “why”

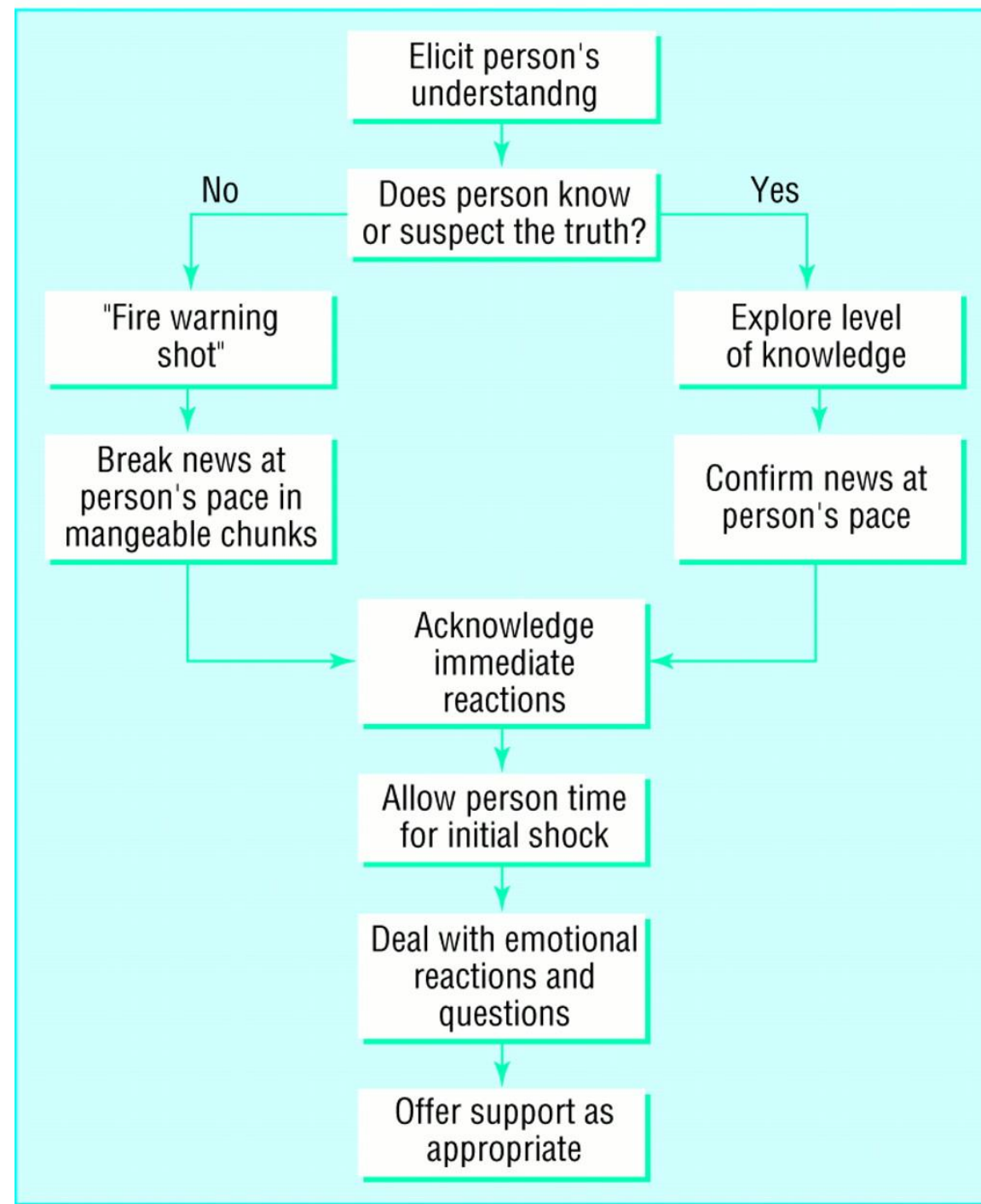
# Discussing diagnosis / prognosis

## Breaking bad news

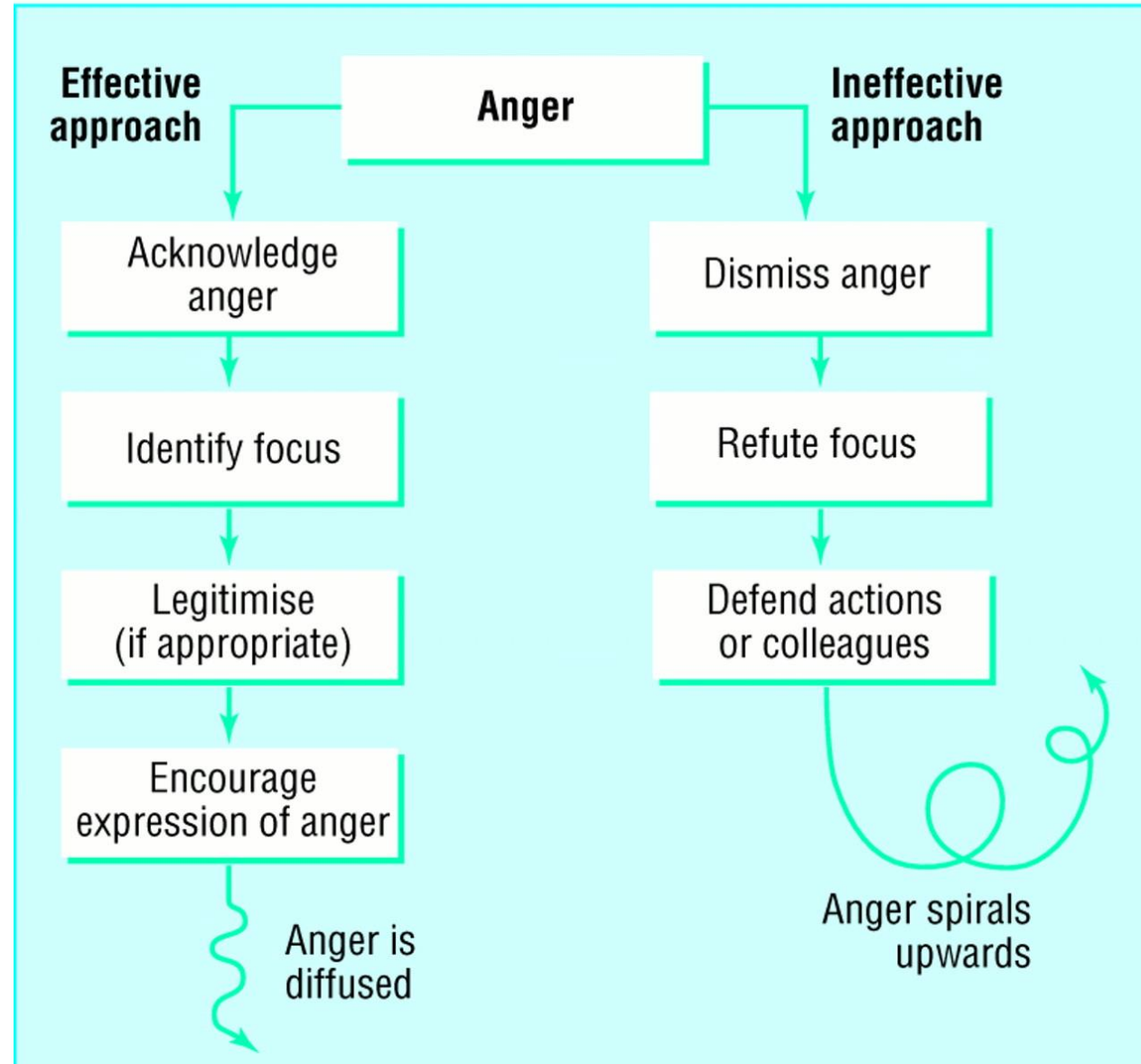
# How to break bad news?

# Steps for Breaking bad news

- Seated comfortably / collected information
- Check if the person wants to know
- Check what they already know
- Warning shot / idea that something serious will be told
- Pause
- Give information in simple words
- Small bits of information
- Check understanding
- Give more information
- Check understanding and feelings
- Check concerns and worries related to this
- Allow them to ask questions
- Discuss plan of treatment
- Summarise / Check understanding



# Dealing with anger



# Appropriate conversational skills are therapeutic!

Youtube [Dr. Santosh Kumar Chaturvedi - YouTube](#)

Website <https://santoshchaturvedi.in/>

Twitter @skchatur

Linked-in sk-chaturvedi

Email ID skchatur@yahoo.com