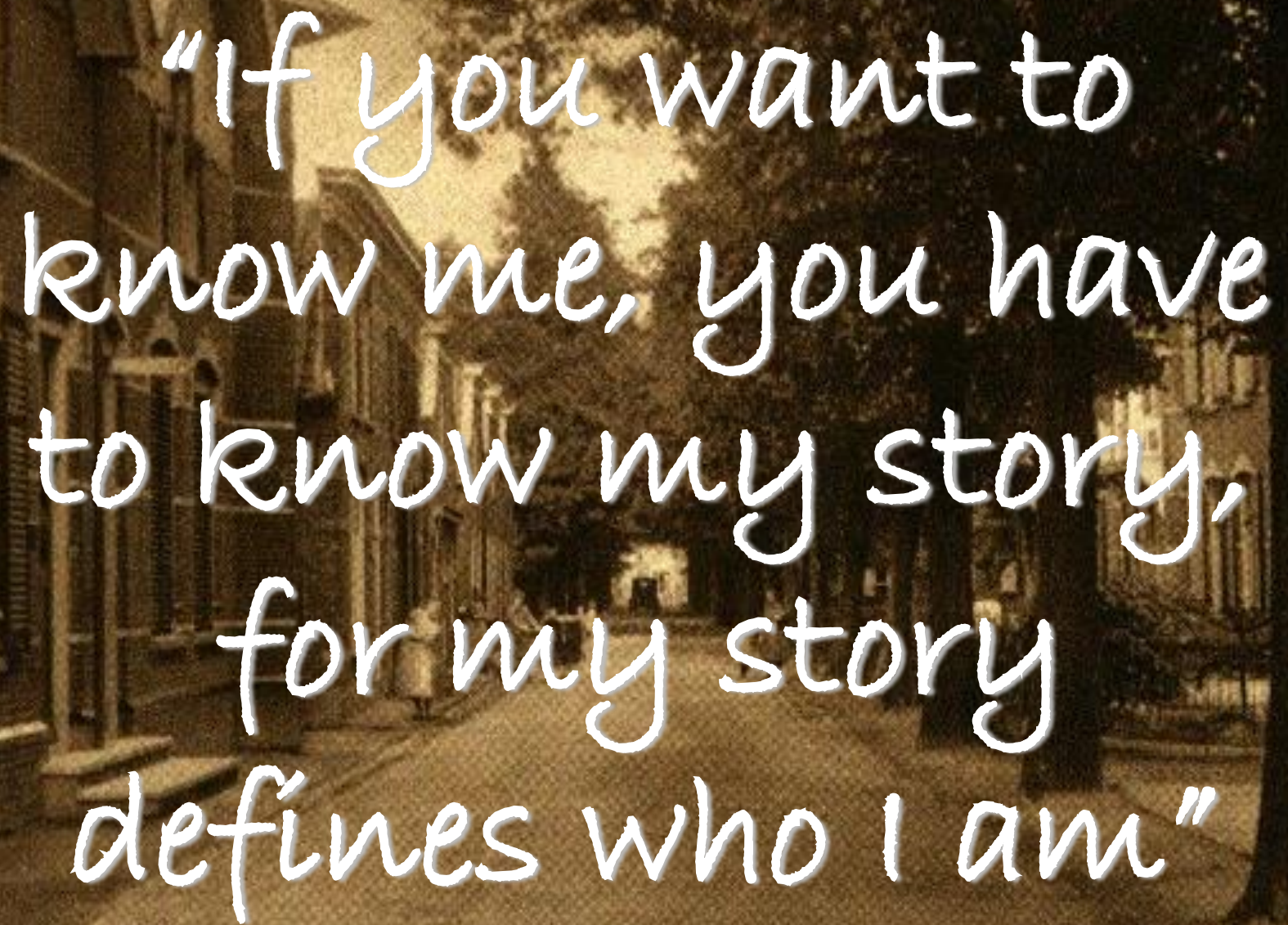




Listening skills and breaking bad news

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"If you want to
know me, you have
to know my story,
for my story
defines who I am"

Listening

- Listening is not the same as hearing!!
- Listening requires focus
- *“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention”*

Rachel Naomi Remen

Active listening

Listening with all your senses

- Listening to the whole person, including:
- Words
- Bodily behaviour: posture and gestures
- Facial expressions: smile, frown, raised eyebrows
- Tone of voice
- Physiological responses: quickening of breath, paleness
- General appearance: grooming, dress.

Active listening

- Listening to yourself and your reactions to what you hear so you can make sense of what people are saying and respond in a helpful, non-judgemental and empathic way.
- Listening with your mind for the real meaning behind their words. What are they really trying to tell me?
- Actively giving feedback on what you hear

Listen with empathy

Listening and respond in a way that improves mutual understanding and trust

- Builds trust and respect
- Facilitates the release of emotions
- Reduces tensions
- Encourages the surfacing of information
- Helps people to discriminate among feelings
- Creates a safe environment

Empathy

Focus on the content of and interaction between:

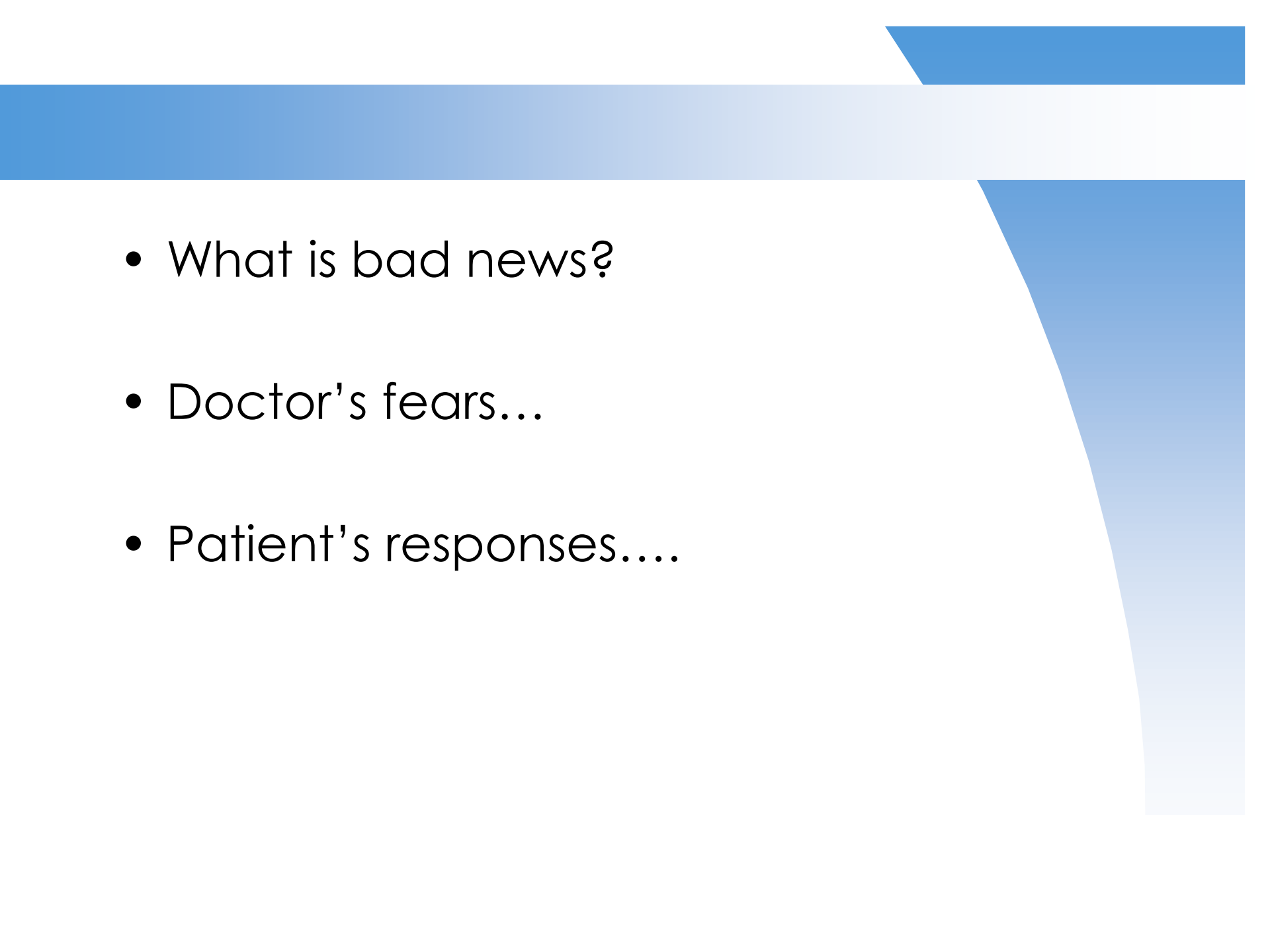
- Feelings
- Experiences
- Behaviour

Formula:

You feel....
(emotions)...because....(experiences/
circumstances)....you reacted (behaviour)

Breaking bad news



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- What is bad news?
 - Doctor's fears...
 - Patient's responses....

Paternalistic Patient-Care Model

“The life of a sick person can be shortened not only by the acts, but also by the words or the manner of a physician. It is therefore, a sacred duty to guard himself carefully in this respect, and to avoid all things which have a tendency to discourage the patient and to depress his spirits”

American Medical Association's first code of medical ethics (1847)

Hippocrates advised

“...concealing most things from the patient while you are attending to him. Give necessary orders with cheerfulness and serenity...revealing nothing of the patient’s future or present condition....”

Patient-centered decision-making model

Late 20th century

- Emphasis on patient autonomy and empowerment
- Physicians need to individualize their manner of breaking bad news based on the patient's desires and needs

Models

- ABCDE Protocol for delivering bad news
- Spikes Protocol
- BREAKS Protocol for delivering bad news
- NURSE Mnemonic for expressing empathy

Advanced preparation

- Review patient's history and situation
- Mental rehearse, prepare emotionally
- Arrange for a support person
- Create a “safe space”

Determines the patient's understanding of the illness

- Start from what the patient knows about the illness

Communicate well

- Use plain language, not difficult medical language
- Use open-ended questions
- Speak frankly, but compassionately
- Use the words cancer or death
- Allow silence and tears
- Proceed at the patient's pace
- Identify misunderstanding, denial, unrealistic expectations

Deal with patient and family reactions

- Acknowledge emotions as they arise
- Listen actively
- Listen with empathy

Summary and strategy

- Provide a summary
- Explore possible options
- Determine patient-specific goals
- Follow-up visits
- Patient must be sure of your support

Give realistic hope to the patient

- In the absence of cure the focus should be on defining and supporting the patient's redefined hopes

Hope

“What is most authentic about human beings is the disposition to hope, to live from the future rather than in terms of the past and present. It is the confidence that the unpredictable will happen...it is a passionate longing for what is ‘not yet’” (Woodward 1972:34)

Hope

“Hope is something we do with others. Hope is too important – its effects on body and soul too significant – to be left to individuals alone. Hope must be the responsibility of the community. Where this is so, and when this is so, there will be a sense of wonder, which has been called the abyss where radical amazement occurs”
(Weingarten 2000:402)

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Thank you!