

See the Person, not just the Parent

- Empower parents to be part of the team by asking them how they would like to be addressed
- Learn their names and show a genuine interest in their lives beyond the hospital

Ask, don't assume

- Take time to ask parents what they want, need, or would like to talk about - don't assume
- Every child's condition is unique; their parents are the best source of information about their specific needs and preferences

The Power of Teamwork

- Actively collaborate and coordinate your efforts with the multi-disciplinary team
- Think of it as children playing together in the same sandpit rather than toddlers side by side

Parents are Experts Too

- Parents spend every day with their child and are experts in their own right
- Respect their knowledge and insights about their child's condition, and involve them in decision-making

Timing is Everything

- Timing can greatly impact how well information is received - consider the context of the family's day when having important conversations and delivering difficult news
- Ask if now is a good time, if they would like anyone else with them, or find a better time

Empathy in Practice

10 Tiny Acts that Transform the Journeys of Parents of Children with Medical Complexity

Dr Nicola Bartram with thanks to the parents who shared their experiences

**The Colab** Partnership through
paediatric complexity
www.colabpartnership.org.uk



Kind Communication

- Clear communication is an act of kindness. Introduce yourself and make eye contact
- Have the courage to engage with parents in a genuine and empathetic manner
- Acknowledging their pain can make all the difference

Share and Be Human

- Building a connection with parents goes beyond the clinical setting
- Humanise the doctor-patient relationship and foster trust through open communication

Learn Their Language

- Learn the forms of communication the child uses, e.g. Makaton
- A couple of signs can bridge gaps and enhance your ability to connect with the child

Listen Actively

- Parents want to feel seen and heard
- Be present and genuinely engaged in their concerns and questions
- Even if you can't help in your role, just to say 'I hear you' can be powerful

Acknowledge the Child

- Always greet and say hello to the child
- Simple gestures like a friendly wave or a cheerful hello can make a child feel more comfortable and at ease