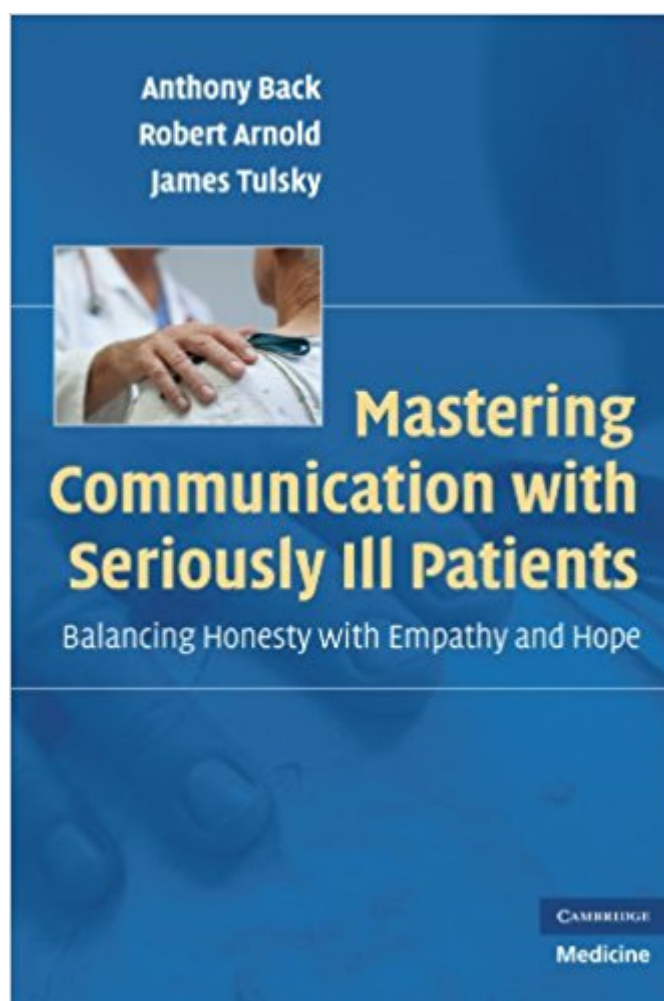


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# Mastering Communication With Seriously Ill Patients: Balancing Honesty With Empathy And Hope



## Synopsis

Physicians who care for patients with life-threatening illnesses face daunting communication challenges. Patients and family members can react to difficult news with sadness, distress, anger, or denial. This book defines the specific communication tasks involved in talking with patients with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Topics include delivering bad news, transition to palliative care, discussing goals of advance-care planning and do-not-resuscitate orders, existential and spiritual issues, family conferences, medical futility, and other conflicts at the end of life. Drs. Anthony Back, Robert Arnold, and James Tulsky bring together empirical research as well as their own experience to provide a roadmap through difficult conversations about life-threatening issues. The book offers both a theoretical framework and practical conversational tools that the practicing physician and clinician can use to improve communication skills, increase satisfaction, and protect themselves from burnout.

## Book Information

Paperback: 170 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (March 2, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521706181

ISBN-13: 978-0521706186

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #483,469 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #149 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Physician & Patient #178 in Books > Medical Books > Administration & Medicine Economics > Practice Management & Reimbursement #210 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Doctor-Patient Relations

## Customer Reviews

Advance Praise for *Mastering Communication*: "Clear, concise, and brimming with useful advice, *Mastering Communication With Seriously Ill Patients* is one of those rare books that manages to be both eminently practical and thoroughly enjoyable. Written by three of the most important figures in the field of doctor-patient communication, this book is a must-read for clinicians who care not only for the seriously ill but for any patient." - Pauline Chen, author of *Final Exam* (Knopf) and "Doctor and Patient" columnist for the *New York Times*"This is a superbly practical and helpful book. It is full

of valuable and wise insights into some difficult conversations with clear analyses of the problems and realistic practical examples of how to solve them. I thoroughly recommend it." -- Robert Buckman MD, author of *How to Break Bad News*"This book is a tour de force! It takes on the most difficult and profound aspects of being a doctor- but it's practical, concise, real -- you can tell it is written by practicing clinicians. I could not put it down and kept thinking about all the conversations I've had with patients and families that could have gone better. Doctors in training now- and all of us-- are lucky- we have this book." - Diane Meier MD, Director of the Center to Advance Palliative Care, MacArthur Fellow"A practical guide to essential skills for effective medical care, this book makes better lives for patients and for their doctors." - Christine Cassel MD, President, American Board of Internal Medicine"This is a wonderful, short primer on the art and science of medical communication that should be required reading for any practicing physician, young or old. This book will likely not only make the reader a better doctor, but will also increase the satisfaction they derive from their practice." - Frederick Appelbaum MD, Director of Clinical Research, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center"Medical students need to read [this book] as they begin their first encounters with patients and then they need to reread it as interns and residents when they find themselves in challenging clinical situations that have not gone well. Fellows in oncology, who are commonly confronted by these everyday conversations, can benefit from this supportive and informative text... The ten chapters have structured outlines and describe communication skills for a specific encounter, like talking about serious news or discussing evidence for making treatment decisions or for saying goodbye. Through case examples and analysis of patient encounters, the authors' experience combined with available research data on how to communicate is described in a step by step format with techniques and practice parameters that can be readily integrated into one's own daily practice... The authors are skilled clinicians who have worked to hone their own communication skills through educational programs, clinical expertise and research. They bring this accumulated knowledge and experience to this unique and formative text. In a clear, concise, straight forward style, they discuss the communication skills necessary to master the care of the seriously ill patient." - Kathleen Foley MD, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center"Although physicians are the intended audience, anyone in the helping professions who interacts with the seriously ill could benefit from this book....This useful step-by-step guide tailors the message of developing good communication to some of the most difficult conversations a physician will ever have." - Doody's Review Service

This book defines the specific communication tasks involved in talking with patients with

life-threatening illnesses and their families. Topics include delivering bad news, transition to palliative care, discussing goals of advance-care planning and do-not-resuscitate orders, existential and spiritual issues, family conferences, medical futility, and other conflicts at the end of life.

Plain language, insightful recommendations, easy to follow and interesting to read, this book offers quality information on how to successfully (and less stressfully) have conversations about difficult topics with patients and family members. It also offers very practical and duplicatable methods to train yourself to think and feel differently about challenging situations. Although it was written by MDs for MDs, it is highly applicable to RNs and ANPs. It is also a relatively short book; it does not go into theories and other sometimes interesting, but always long-winded scholarly literature like most nursing education. It is a refreshing change.

I am a physician who has practiced Emergency Medicine for over 25 years. I am in the process of transitioning into the sub specialty of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. This book, and the skills it describes, are critically important to providers who frequently deliver "serious news" to their patients and to the families of their patients. The communication skills explained inside the cover of this book were never taught to me during my medical education. I will revisit this publication often as I attempt to implement these techniques into my own clinical practice.

This excellent resource should be required reading for every medical student and all those working in the fields of primary care, oncology, hospice and palliative care. It teaches the fundamentals of good communication, which includes exercises for listening, a concept almost foreign in our current healthcare culture where providers are pressured to see more patients in less time. This is my new go-to reference and is currently at the top of my recommended reads. Thank you Drs Back, Arnold and Tulsky.

Communicating serious news and dealing with end-of-life issues are poorly taught in medical school, but something that is constantly present in practice. This book is a quick read, but a great resource in how to have those discussions go well. As we are constantly dealing with death, we easily forget how new, personal and foreign a serious situation is to the individual patient we see. This book walks through discussions about breaking serious news, giving a prognosis, to discussing code status while being mindful of where the patient is at. I can't advocate this enough as needing to be a book in every doctor's library.

Very good book based on the Vital Talk/OncoTalk communication workshops by the same group. Interesting and helpful introduction to improving patient communication in the field of Palliative Care.

As a hospital chaplain, I wish EVERY doctor would read this book and put into practice its excellent techniques. The book is easy to follow and models in its style, the clear and helpful communication a doctor can provide if you take the time to learn to talk this way. In the long run, quality communication can save time and money, give patients truly INFORMED consent, prevent futile treatment and improve quality of life for patients and their families, especially those facing end of life. I see so many doctors fail their patients because they don't know how to talk in a way patients can understand. This book helps you identify how much information a patient wants about their disease, their treatment, their prognosis and how to help them trust YOU. One size does not fit all and this helps you fit your conversation to the individual patient. I was privileged just this week to be a family member in a consultation with a doctor who used these techniques and it inspired such confidence in that doctor from all of my family. You will be a better doctor and your patients will feel better about you and more confident about their ability to make good decisions for themselves if you follow these guidelines--it will probably even improve your outcomes and patient satisfaction scores. It's a quick read with good skill practice exercises. Do it for yourself and for your patients, their families and the support staff who are left to pick up the pieces if you don't learn to communicate well. If you bothered to spend all the time and money going to medical school, invest a few hours in reading this book. It will be as valuable as anything else you learned in your training.

Provided very practical advice and road maps to follow depending on the situation. Excellent resource for anyone who talks to patients, no matter what their status

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