

1. Communication challenges and COVID - 19.

Telephone consultations with outpatients – tips for success.

In face to face consultations we communicate much information non-verbally. In a phone consultation you may need to compensate for the absence of this non-verbal communication. The following will help you have successful phone consultations.

Stage and reason	What you say
Opening – <i>compensate for handshake/smile/welcome</i>	“Thank you for talking by phone. It is great to hear you.”
Consider who is there for support	“Is there anyone with you at the moment?” “Who do you have available for support? Is there a family or whānau member you can talk to after this call?”
Acknowledge the difference	“This is a bit different from seeing each other face to face. We can make it work just as well, however.”
Checking in/ acknowledge or name emotions – <i>demonstrates care and compassion when they can't see you. And then seek to understand why they are feeling like that a little more.</i>	“How have you been?” “Thank you for telling me that. It sounds like things have been hard/ frustrating/ difficult/ scary/ worrying/ uncertain/ feeling alone.” “Tell me more...”
Agenda setting- <i>clarifies the role of the call and sets expectations. Saves time.</i>	“Let’s decide what we need to talk about so we can get through everything.” “I would like to find out what is most important to you right now and also discuss some medical issues. How does that sound?”
Their agenda/validation- <i>Builds trust and connection by demonstrating you want to hear their priorities.</i>	“What is the most important thing that you need to talk about today?” “Tell me more... “ “Thank you for telling me that’
Respond to emotion or to silence – <i>demonstrates care and compassion/builds trust</i>	“It sounds daunting/ overwhelming/frustrating/ ...” “And It helps to know this.”
Your agenda/permission- <i>signposting</i>	“Are you ok if we talk now about [x,y,z]?” Talk about the things you need to raise with them.
Respond to emotion or to silence – <i>demonstrates care and compassion/builds trust</i>	“I know this is probably not what you wanted to hear...” “I am wondering how you are responding to that...” “I know this might come as a shock. Are you able to tell me what is going through your mind?” I know this is a lot to take in. Can I just check in with you? Where are you up to?”
Summarise the key points – <i>this helps reinforce the key issues and checks to screen if your agendas align., and if there is something not yet discussed..</i>	“So, we’ve spoke about x, y and z. Have I got the right, and is there anything more we need to talk about?”
Planning/aligning/support – <i>helps adherence</i>	“So, can we make a plan together for the next steps? Let’s arrange a further conversation in x days/weeks” “Thank you so much for your time. Just so I can check if we’ve covered everything, what’s your main take away from this conversation?” “Is there anything else we need to discuss before we say goodbye?” “If you need to contact us, you can do so by...”