

Non Verbal Communication Bias



“ When patients walk up to the front desk while I’m on the phone, I think I sometimes come off as unwelcoming. I don’t mean to be rude, I’m just super focused on the phone call. I don’t want to send the wrong message, but phone calls from patients are just as important as patients who are currently in the office. ”

-Samantha, Medical Assistant

Reflection Questions:

1. How might the non-verbal expression in the photo above be interpreted by an adolescent patient checking in?
2. What can Samantha do with her non-verbal communication/body language to send a welcoming message to the person standing in front of her?

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“ Kids these days seem to always be so into their cell phones. Sometimes, when younger patients are in the exam room, they look down at their phones the entire time. I was raised during a time when not looking your elders in the eye was considered disrespectful, so it’s hard for me to adjust to this ‘new generation’.

-Dr. Callahan

Reflection Questions:

1. Although Dr. Callahan is acknowledging her bias about young people on their phones, when she meets with young patients on their phones, her body language still shows her judgment. What might this look like?
2. The next time Dr. Callahan notices herself displaying this body language, what can she do to check herself?

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“ Last week, one of my adolescent patients was very upset with me. She told me after the visit that I was taking too many notes, and that I was not listening to her. An important part of my job is to take accurate notes during each session, but maybe it came off as inattentive. That was not my intention, but now I feel pretty bad about it. ”

-Elise, Therapist

Reflection Question:

1. This is a real concern for providers. What are some ways that a provider can appropriately document during a visit, while still conveying attentive body language?