



# The Art of Pastoral Communication in the Healing Touch Session

by Barbara Litchfield, MA, HTCP

**H**ealing Touch practitioners are in a unique position to provide a pastoral listening ear during Healing Touch sessions. Before the client arrives we prepare for that person by grounding ourselves and connecting with the Universal Energy Source. This grounding focuses our hearts, minds, and spirits on the work we are about to do. We let go of our personal agendas and earthly concerns. It can be a very sacred time, one in which we serve God by serving the highest good of our client.

After our preparation it is important to keep in mind that there are **5 important keys** when conducting an effective, yet pastoral intake-update interview. The **first key** is to give every client our undivided attention. We offer a comfortable chair and sit opposite that person giving direct eye contact and focusing on what they are communicating to us. The **second key** is to begin with “*door openers*” such as, “I understand that you have some pain. Please tell me about it.” We extend this invitation to our clients to talk about their emotional concerns, physical pain, or stress. Door opening questions give them the freedom to talk openly. Once the door is opened and the client is talking we can then ask *open-ended questions* such as, “How did it happen? Please go on.” When the client is speaking, the practitioner can further encourage the client with *acknowledgment responses* such as a nod of the head or a simple “yes.” The client may pause between thoughts. This is OK and we should not be afraid of the silence. Often it is a way for the client and the practitioner to collect their thoughts. We continue to focus on the client and by using acknowledgment responses we encourage the client to continue.<sup>1</sup>

As the intake-update continues the **third key** for an effective interview is the offering of a *feeling response* such as, “You’re saying that you’re under a great deal of stress right now.” This is a feeling statement because we are reflecting back the feeling of stress, which can be manifested physically in the body or emotions. It is wise to wait for the client to confirm. To maximize the communication further a *meaning response* may be added to the feeling response. An example of a *feeling/meaning response* would be, “You’re saying that you’re under a great deal of stress right now *because you’ve missed a lot of work.*” The words after “*because*” reflect the meaning to the client and demonstrate that they have been truly heard. Again, waiting for their response is important. Communicating in this way helps move the intake-update forward. It often releases much of the mental congestion the client may have and pinpoints the goal/s for the session.

The **fourth key** to conducting an effective intake-update is to *summarize* the issue about which the client has been talking.<sup>2</sup> For example -- a client states that she is concerned (mentally/emotionally) about her 23 year-old son is experiencing chronic fatigue syndrome and is seeing several doctors for medical advice. However, since he is so fatigued, he has missed a lot of work and the client fears he may lose his position. These concerns are causing the client to experience stomach upset, which she rates as 8 out of 10 - with 10 being the highest. You want to let her know she’s been heard and clarify any points of her statement. An appropriate summary would be, “You’re experiencing a lot of stomach upset right now because of your concern about the cause of your son’s chronic fatigue syndrome”. This reflects feelings as well as the meaning or cause of the stress. Another summary could be, “Have you considered that your concern about your son’s medical condition could be the cause of your stomach upset?” She may nod her head in agreement or confirm your statement. If you reflect back an incorrect

statement then further clarification may be necessary.

The **fifth key** to conducting an effective intake-update is to keep your focus on the client. We are often eager to share a similar situation and may want to tell this client what worked in that situation. In fact, we may want to give advice! We should avoid comparing other situations with this one and stay away from giving advice. Staying completely focused on the client and remembering the five keys will improve the effectiveness of your intake-update interviews which will have a positive impact on your Healing Touch session.

1. Gutting, John, Ph.D., "Pastoral Communication," The Athenaeum Of Ohio, 6616 Beechmont Road, Cincinnati, OH, 2003.

2. Gutting, John, Ph.D., lecture 2003.

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