

# ENHANCING EMS SAFETY THROUGH UNDERSTANDING PATIENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

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# Objectives

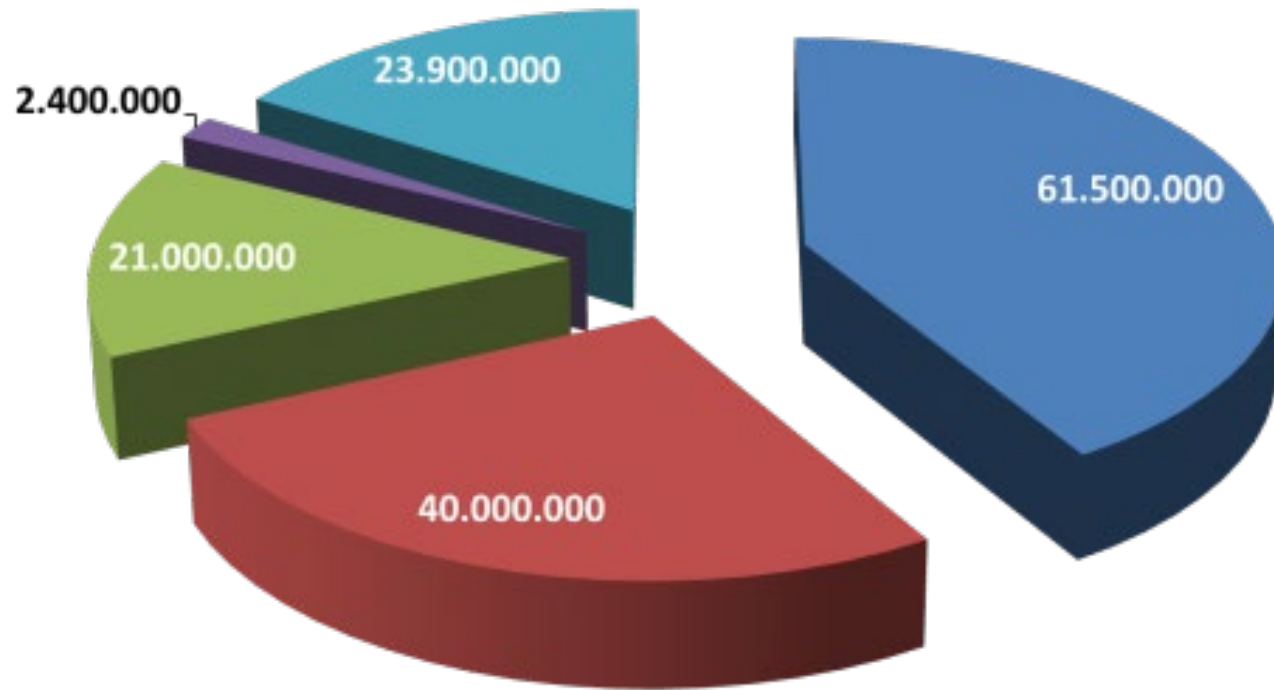
- **Defining Mental Illness**
- **The dynamics of violence.**
- **Creating and maintaining a safe patient care environment.**
- **How to recognize and deal with hostile aggressive patients using Verbal De-escalation as a nonviolent response.**

# Staggering Statistics

- **Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (46.6 million) experiences mental illness in a given year.**
- **Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. (11.2 million) experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.**
- **Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%.**

# Staggering Statistics

## Facts about Mental Health in the US (Number of People in 2014)



■ Diagnosable Mental Disorder ■ Anxiety disorders ■ Depression ■ Schizophrenia ■ Illicit drug use

# What is Mental Illness?

**A mental illness is a condition that affects a patient's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day. Each patient will have different experiences, even patients with the same diagnosis.**

# Types of Mental Illness

ADHD

Anxiety  
Disorders

Bipolar  
Disorder

Borderline  
Personality  
Disorder

Depression

Dissociative  
Disorders

Early Psychosis  
and Psychosis

Eating  
Disorders

Obsessive -  
compulsive  
Disorder

PTSD

Schizoaffective  
Disorder

Schizophrenia

# S/S of Borderline Personality Disorder

- **An intense fear of abandonment**
- **A pattern of unstable intense relationships, such as idealizing someone one moment and then suddenly believing the person doesn't care enough or is cruel**
- **Rapid changes in self-identity and self-image that include shifting goals and values.**
- **Periods of stress-related paranoia and loss of contact with reality, lasting from a few minutes to a few hours**

# S/S of Borderline Personality Disorder

- **Impulsive and risky behaviors, such as gambling, reckless driving, unsafe sex, spending sprees, binge eating or drug abuse, or sabotaging success by suddenly quitting a good job or ending a positive relationship**
- **Suicidal threats or behavior or self-injury, often in response to fear of separation or rejection**
- **Wide mood swings lasting from a few hours to a few days, which can include intense happiness, irritability, shame or anxiety**



# Prehospital Provider Training

**We were all taught BSI.  
Is the Scene Safe?**

**What does  
“Is the Scene Safe”  
really mean?**

# Universal Precautions

In the 1990's, OSHA developed  
**Universal Precautions for Violence.**

This was part of the first official OSHA document  
related to Health Care worker safety:

**Violence** should be expected but  
can be avoided or mitigated  
through preparation.

# EMS Workplace



# Warning Signs of Increasing Anger/Violence

- **Pacing and/or restlessness**
- **Clenched fist**
- **Increasingly loud speech**
- **Excessive insistence**
- **Threats**
- **Cursing**



# Does Your Kit Have ALL The Tools



# Effective Communication Skills

- 1. Respect personal space – personal space will be greater with patients who are escalating.**
- 2. Always talk to patients in a calm, respectful, compassionate and caring tone of voice.**
- 3. Avoid power struggles. Remember that it is not about power and control, rather every interaction you have has therapeutic value.**

# Effective Communication Skills

**4. Identify wants and feelings.**

**5. Be concise - don't use long winded questions, or responses.**

**6. Consider focusing on the positive versus the negative.**

# Effective Communication Skills

**HELLO**  
**I AM...**

**A Good  
Listener**



# Non-Verbal Communication

- **Facial expressions**
- **Body movement and posture**
- **Eye contact**
- **Touch**
- **Personal Space**

# Active Listening

# Active Listening

## Signs that you are actively listening:

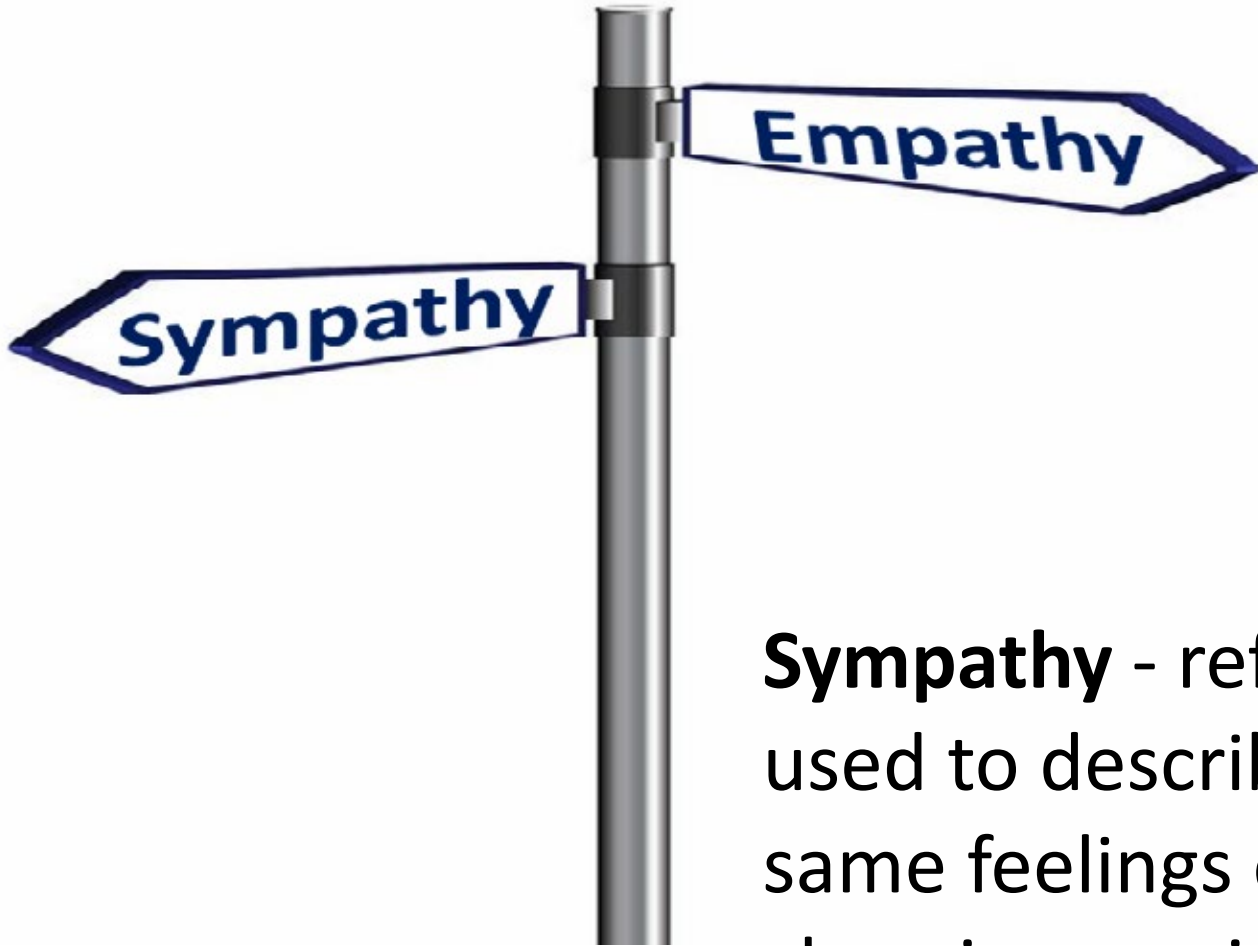
- Remaining silent but asking questions or commenting as needed.
- If you are confused by what is meant/said, you can repeat back and clarify as needed..."Tell me if I have this right" ...
- Maintaining eye contact.
- Giving them your undivided attention

## Signs that you are most likely not actively listening:

- Talking to another patient or doing something else at same time (phone, text, etc.) the patient is talking to you.
- Cutting the patient off, interrupting them while they are talking.
- Assuming you know what they mean or are about to say, so you tune out



# What's the Difference



**Empathy** - referring to imagining or understanding how someone might feel, without necessarily having those feelings yourself.

**Sympathy** - referring to feelings or emotion, is used to describe when one patient shares the same feelings of another, such as when someone close is experiencing grief or loss.

# Does Your Kit Have ALL The Tools

**Non-Verbal Communication Skills**

**Verbal Communication Skills**

**Active Listening Skills**

**Convey Empathy**

**Convey Sympathy**



# Safety & Health Training

- **Training is a critical component of any prevention strategy for First Responders, EMTS & Paramedics.**
- **Use Role Play as a tool when practicing mental health patient scenarios.**
- **Remember personal space, facial expressions, body movements and posture in order to nurture a safe prehospital provider and patient experience.**

# Thank You





# Contact Information

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