



Breaking Bad News



Breaking bad news is an important skill frequently utilized by EMS providers. Speak honestly and sensitively to the people you are caring for and their loved ones. By using this structure for your conversation, you can feel more confident in your ability to communicate clearly and empathetically, even in the worst situations, while reducing provider strain and burnout.

S

Setting

Try to find quiet location, eliminate distractions, sit or kneel

P

Perception

Assess what patient or family knows or suspects so far

I

Invitation

*Ask patient or family what they would like to know
Ask if it is OK to share what you know*

K

Knowledge

*Share in plain language in small chunks, no jargon
A 'warning shot' will give them a heads up of bad news*

E

Emotion

*Respect feelings, allow silence for them to absorb
Respond with empathy*

S

Summarize

Recap and tell them what happens next

Apply SPIKES to keep conversation on track when delivering bad news