

DOCTOR-PATIENT CONVERSATION

Case: F/20, White, Suicide attempt

Doctor: Good morning Mrs. Drew. You look sad today. Is there something wrong?

Patient: I tried to take several Tylenol tablets to kill myself yesterday. My husband sent me here. People think I'm crazy.

Doctor: Can you tell me more about it?

Patient: I have been depressed doctor.

Doctor: When did you start feeling depressed?

Patient: About three days ago doctor.

Doctor: Did something happen? Was there anything that made you sad?

Patient: None. Well, I gave birth to a baby boy 3 weeks ago. I think I'm a terrible mother.

Doctor: What made you say that?

Patient: It's just that I'm not a good mother.

Doctor: I'm sorry to hear that Ms. Drew. But hey, you are not the only mother who feels that way. There are mothers out there who go through this kind of depression after giving birth. This might sound weird but it's true. It's very hard to be a mom. And you know what? I'm here to help you.

Patient: Ok doctor.

Doctor: Now, have you ever had similar episodes before?

Patient: You mean feeling depressed after giving birth?

Doctor: Yes.

Patient: No. He is my first baby.

Doctor: Ok. Were there complications during pregnancy and after delivery?

Patient: There was none doctor. I had a normal delivery and the baby is in good health.

Doctor: Good to hear that. Mrs. Drew, do you think this depression is affecting your life now?

Patient: Yes, a lot.

Doctor: I see. Any weight loss? Appetite loss?

Patient: Yes. I lost some weight and I don't like to eat.

Doctor: How about sleeping problems?

Patient: Yes. I can't make myself sleep sometimes.

Doctor: Do you feel sad? Worthless? Hopeless?

Patient: Yes.

Doctor: Uh-huh. Ms. Drew, I'll ask you a sensitive question. This would help me learn more about how you feel. Do you mind?

Patient: Not at all. It's ok doctor.

Doctor: Thank you. Now, have you ever thought of killing the baby?

Patient: I have but I never tried.

Doctor: Do you feel ashamed of what you were thinking?

Patient: Yes, I do. It makes me feel I'm the worst mother in the world.

Doctor: Ok. Uhm, have you ever been depressed before? Did you receive treatment?

Patient: Actually when I was in college, I was diagnosed with depression. My dad passed away and I felt really sad.

Doctor: I'm sorry. But I'm glad you were able to overcome that situation. How is your husband? Is he supportive?

Patient: He is doctor. He always tries to understand me.

Doctor: That's good. Are there any family members you are close with? Or friends you can talk to if you have problems?

Patient: Don't worry doctor. I have a lot of friends to turn to.

Doctor: Great. Do you know of anybody in your family who was also diagnosed with depression?

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Patient: Yes, my aunt. She was depressed when her husband died.

Doctor: I see. Thank you for answering all my questions Mrs. Drew. I understand this situation you are going through right now is tough. Once you feel depressed, it is hard to get out of it. You need help. You might hurt yourself again. So it seems like the best idea is for you to stay in the hospital for a couple of days so that I can fully examine you. And I also recommend you get some counseling. That will help you a lot. In the meantime, I'll give you some medications which can make you feel better. How does this sound to you?

Patient: Sounds good doctor. Thank you.

Doctor: You're welcome.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

- Why do you think it is important to ask the patient about his/her support system?
- How would you feel when a patient tells you he/she wants to kill himself/herself?
- What communication strategies should you use when dealing with a depressed patient?