

## Suggestion for Clinician

One missed opportunity to demonstrate empathize skill in the conversation above was to recognize and validate Sophie's feelings. The doctor could have said something like, "I understand how difficult this must be for you, and I'm sorry you have to go through this. It's normal to feel overwhelmed and scared in this situation, and I'm here to help." By validating and recognizing Sophie's feelings, the doctor is demonstrating empathy.

## Transcript

Sophie Hallman: Hi, doctor. I'm meeting with you today to help get some questions answered about my condition.

Sophie Hallman: I'm wondering why my pain has been getting worse recently. It's been really difficult to manage and I'm not sure what's causing it.

Doctor: How are you today?

Sophie Hallman: Hi, doctor. I'm here today to seek some answers about my condition. I've been experiencing a significant increase in my pain recently, and it has been incredibly challenging to manage. I'm unsure of what may be causing this. How are you doing today?

Doctor: I myself am doing great. Sophie, I'm really sorry to hear about your pain. Can you tell me a little bit more about that? >> Empathize

Sophie Hallman: Thank you for your concern, doctor. The pain I've been experiencing has been getting worse over the past few weeks. It started off as a dull ache, but now it's a constant, sharp pain. It's affecting my daily activities and making it difficult for me to sleep at night. I've been taking my pain medication regularly, but it doesn't seem to be providing much relief. I'm just not sure why it's getting worse. Can you help me figure out the cause?

Doctor: Yes, I can. I'm very sorry about your pain and that the medication isn't helping very much. So I know why the pain has gotten worse, and I'm afraid the news is not good. >> Empathize

Sophie Hallman: I appreciate your support, but I think I'm ready to hear about my condition now. Would you be able to explain why my pain has gotten worse?

Doctor: Sophie, your cancer, despite our intentions of treating it, has gotten worse and I'm afraid it's terminal. >> be Explicit

Sophie Hallman: It's really difficult to hear that my cancer is likely terminal. Thank you for being here for me and providing support. Your help means a lot to me.

Doctor: Yeah, SOPHIE, I know that this wasn't the news that we were hoping for. >> Empathize

Sophie Hallman: Let's pause here for feedback on this conversation.

# Empathize - Tips and Examples

- > I can see this is hard to hear.
- > I can only imagine how upsetting this is.
- > Can you tell me how you're feeling about this tough news?
- > You're right, this sucks.
- > I wish I had a treatment that worked.
- > I hear that you want me to focus on the facts, not your emotions. I can do that.
- > I wish we had the cure you so want and deserve.
- > Your values clearly reflect your love for your kids. They are lucky to have you in their lives.
- > Yes, you are between a rock and a hard place.
- > You are managing this unbearable situation with such grace!
- > It is such an honor to know and work with you.
- > You are handling this impossible situation with impressive clarity, kindness, and wisdom.
- > I am with you.