

Intervening a Clinical Encounter

You may need to intervene if a learner is not communicating well or making the right decisions. It's tempting to just interrupt and take over, but there are better ways to allow a learner to get the practice and experience he or she must have and still ensure that your patient receives the necessary care.

Quick Tips:

- Set expectations. Let the learner know ahead of time that you may intervene in the patient encounter.
- Decide, in advance, how much of the conversation the learner will handle.
- Have the learner introduce you to the patient and explain your role (or vice versa).
- Frame any interventions as adding value rather than negating what the learner has said.
- Intercede with a question ("Could I add something here?") to invoke politeness and support of the learner.
- Return control of the encounter back to the learner once you have made your point.
- Explain in the learner's debriefing why you decided to act. Point out what emotional cues or other factors he or she missed or did not acknowledge.
- Rely on the sandwich model to ensure the learner receives positive and negative points.
- Emphasize the importance of looking ahead to future encounters rather than dwelling on what the learner could have said.

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