The Question Dissection for December 8 is...

A severely injured client is moved into an examination area of the emergency department. The family member who accompanied the client to the ED is screaming at the nurse, saying that someone better start doing something right away. What is the best response by the nurse?

1. "I need you to go to the waiting area. You can come back when you're more in control."
2. "I'm going to give you a few minutes alone so you can calm down."
3. "I can't think when you are yelling at me. Talk to me in a normal voice."
4. "I know you are upset. But please control yourself and sit down. Otherwise I will have to call security."

Let's begin the Question Dissection!

Sue: Workplace violence is defined as an act of aggression directed toward persons at work or on duty, ranging from offensive or threatening language to homicide. Pain, stress, lack of privacy, fear of the unknown and long wait times in the emergency department can all contribute to a sense of frustration that increases the risk of verbal and physical abuse against staff.

In this particular scenario, the family member is verbally abusing the nurse. On the one hand, we can understand the sense of desperation this family member is experiencing. But this behavior cannot continue because we know that physical violence is often preceded by verbal abuse.

The best strategy for de-escalating the situation is to stay calm, manage your own response and to repeatedly remind the family member, and the client, that you are there to help. However, you must also set limits to the behavior, using commands to express the desired behavior, and provide logical and enforceable consequences for noncompliance.
Let’s take a look at the responses and determine which one is the best. First, the nurse is dealing with a very upset adult and not a 2 year-old who needs a time out. So the nurse can’t tell the person to go to the waiting area and come back when he’s more in control. And although it may be a statement of fact that the nurse can’t think with someone yelling at her, telling the family member to talk in a normal voice will probably only provoke a more aggressive response. Also, telling someone to calm down will most certainly provoke the exact opposite effect.

The only response that identifies the client’s feelings, sets limits AND offers enforceable consequences is the one that states: “I know you are upset. But please control yourself and sit down. Otherwise I will have to call security.”

Melinda: Thanks so much for talking with us today Sue. For all you listening, if you have any questions please post them in our online community, at learningext.com.

And remember to catch our next podcast January 19th.

[Outro Music]