# Patient-Centered Care Activity: Needs, Wants, Emotions, Stereotypes

**Title:** THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE  
**Length:** 20 Minutes-30 Minutes  
**Overview:** Elements of the patient experience are identified and discussed: Needs, Wants, Emotions, and Stereotypes. Participants use their own experiences as patients to define each. Definitions used to frame effective service behaviors for patients in all four areas. Participants collectively outline “our” patient and “our” practices. Participants construct an individualized action plan for their areas of behavior change and partner with a colleague for post-training implementation.  
**Behavior change goals may include:** Use of empathy, proper acknowledgment of customer, use of open-ended questions, explaining wait times, use of “teachback,” reduced use of medical jargon, offering assistance without being asked, monitoring facilities to enhance patient comfort, etc. The specific behavior changes will be defined by the behaviors identified during the activity.  
**Preparation:** Hang 4 large sheets of paper at 4 points in the room. Title one of them NEEDS, one of them WANTS, one of them EMOTIONS, & one of them STEREOTYPES. Have 4 additional sheets, each titled BEHAVIORS ready for use. If the room is equipped with dry erase or chalkboards these can be used.  
**Materials:** 8 large sheets of tablet paper, markers, index cards, facilitator’s guide, and tape.

## Agenda/Activity

**Introduction**  
Facilitator explains:  
*Anyone who has worked in healthcare knows it’s easy to get caught up in the routine of the technical and functional parts of our jobs. We have to be reminded some times of what it’s like to be a patient and, more specifically, all the different forces that affect patients when they come to see us. This brief activity is a way for us to stay connected to and empathize with the patients we see every day.*

Instructions in *ITALICS* can be used verbatim or the facilitator can paraphrase and put the instructions into their own words, depending on their comfort.

**Needs, Wants, Emotions, & Stereotypes Activity**  
Ask participants to think back to a specific experience they had as a patient. Explain that, while they do NOT need to share anything personal or intrusive, we want to hear about that experience from four perspectives. (Direct their attention to the paper sheets around the room). Explain the four perspectives:

- **NEEDS:** As a patient, what HAD to happen? What were the basic situational needs you had?  
  - Ex. To be treated, to be seen, medication, etc.
- **WANTS:** As a patient, what WANTS did you have beyond your basic

When setting up consider adding the description and examples to each posted page.

If personnel in attendance indicate they’ve never been a patient, invite them to reflect on the experience of a close family member or loved one for the activity.

Large groups: consider dividing participants into four groups, have
needs?
  - Ex. To be pain-free, not be rushed, to get well, to be treated compassionately, etc.

**EMOTIONS**: What emotions did you experience as a patient?
  - Ex. Nervous, uncomfortable, vulnerable, etc.

**STEREOTYPES**: What preconceived notions exist about the environment or personnel they visited?
  - Ex. The doc is in a hurry, cold exam room, I’m just a number, etc.

Provide markers to participants and ask them to move around the room and add to each list from their own experience. Encourage writing multiple things on each sheet. Do not rush this activity. Allow plenty of time for all participants to visit all sheets (Typically 5 to 10 minutes minimum).

When list-making is finished, review each list with the group. Consider asking for volunteers to read/review. Ask if anything should be added to any of the lists before moving on.

**Behaviors**
After reviewing all lists ask participants to now think about the behaviors they would have wanted to see from staff to address the various Needs, Wants, Emotions, & Stereotypes on the lists. Hang four blank sheets (each titled “BEHAVIORS”) next to each Needs, Wants, Emotions & Stereotypes list. Again instruct participants to rotate and add to each list from their own experience.

Examples:

- **NEEDS**: Prompt appointment, thorough diagnosis
- **WANTS**: Smile, Greeting, Express caring or concern
- **EMOTIONS**: Use empathy, explain wait times, not rushed
- **STEREOTYPES**: monitor room temp, offer coffee, restrict social conversations

When list-making is finished, review each list with the group. Consider asking for volunteers to read/review. Ask for clarification as needed. Ask if anything should be added to any of the lists before moving on.

**Summary**
Facilitator explains the function and takeaways of the activity as follows:

Sometimes, in order to understand who our patients are and how to best serve them, we have to use our own patient experiences.

Obviously we all work in a healthcare environment but it’s easy to lose sight of some of these things. The lists of Needs, Wants, Emotions, & Stereotypes is a summary of who our patient is when they walk through the door. The list of Behaviors is what we need to do daily to ensure we’re meeting them where they are at.
Facilitator asks for a volunteer to type up a summary page titled “OUR PATIENT” highlighting the various Needs, Wants, Emotions & Stereotypes and another summary page titled “OUR PRACTICES” summarizing the behaviors identified in the activity. Participants identify a location where these summaries will be posted and a timeline for having this step completed.

Optional Step: Individualized Action Plans
Facilitator distributes index cards to each participant. Asks that each person write START, STOP, CONTINUE, OBSERVER on the card in this manner:

| START: |
| STOP: |
| CONTINUE: |
| OBSERVER: |

Facilitator asks participants to name one thing they will start doing, one thing they will stop doing, and one thing they will continue doing based on the activity just completed. Facilitator also asks them to identify one co-worker who they will trust to keep them to their stated goals. Allow time for participants to fill out the card and for sharing with observers to take place.

Facilitator might say: What I’d like to do is challenge you to identify one thing you will start doing that you haven’t regularly, one thing you will stop doing as a result of our conversation today, and one thing you will continue doing because it clearly aligns with our best practices and you’ve been doing it all along. We’d also like you to identify someone on staff that you will share this with and who can periodically remind you of your goals.”

Wrap-Up
Thank attendees for the participation and encourage them to put their action plan in a location they will periodically encounter, to ensure it prompts them from time to time. Remind them also to periodically stop and review the “OUR PATIENT” and “OUR PRACTICES” postings to keep the lessons of the activity at the forefront.