



HOW TO handle angry and frustrated patients with diabetes and erectile dysfunction (ED)

Let's first explore anger.

It isn't easy to work with patients when their anger flairs. Their hostile messages can often trigger strong emotions in us and in others around them. Here are a few possible sources for their feelings.

Many patients feel very angry when they develop ED in addition to having diabetes. This second diagnosis affects their ability to enjoy sexual pleasure and can negatively impact their self-esteem. They could also feel angry that they have so many medical challenges.

For others, anger may be a habitual response. Most of us know people who get upset easily and blame others for their difficulties. Your patient may be one of these individuals.

While growing up, many people were told that it was wrong to show anger, so they never learned how to control it well and be tolerant of others. They certainly don't receive any guidance from today's popular reality shows that love to feature contestants having meltdowns and hair-pulling, cat fights!

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When a patient becomes angry, first take care of your response to his behavior. Put out your internal “fire” by using SDR – “STOP, DROP and ROLL,” a technique that may remind you of the fire safety tool many of us learned as young children:



STOP

Identify the negative thought that is floating around your brain



DROP

Drop that negative thought by adopting a more compassionate one. You can do this by reminding yourself that you shouldn't take your patient's anger personally. His strong emotion isn't focused at you, but at his diagnosis and frustration with his inability to sexually perform to his satisfaction.



ROLL

Move forward with your new, more positive attitude.

Once you feel calmer, try the following:

Show that you appreciate your patient's position. You don't have to agree with his angry comments, but you should identify and acknowledge his strong emotion. Tell him that you see he is angry and understand how this situation could make him feel this way. Let him know that he is certainly not alone as more than 39 million men in the United States have this problem.¹ Use good eye contact and body language that shows that you are paying close attention. When he calms down, encourage him to use his anger to motivate him to find a solution. Fortunately, there are many options available.

Patients who become frustrated easily don't tend to embrace challenges. They don't see them as opportunities for greater growth and learning. Instead, they view them as problems that get in the way of their personal goals. If your patient continues to be frustrated with his medical issues, don't take it personally. Some people aren't ready to grow, set goals and move forward.

Refer patients who remain angry or frustrated (or both) to a qualified mental health professional who can help them deal with these strong emotions.

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