Appearing More Approachable—Enhancing Communication with Your Student

As you are aware, good communication between you and your student is paramount in creating an amicable environment, one in which the student is able to continually learn and thrive. In order for free communication to occur between you and your student, the student must sense that you are “approachable” and “open” to allowing the student to express his thoughts and concerns.

**The following are some reasons a student may perceive their CI as “unapproachable”:**

* The student feels the CI is always in a hurry, not fully acknowledging the student or providing full attention to the student;
* The student feels criticized or embarrassed when they make a mistake;
* The student senses that the CI is not taking the student’s concerns seriously;
* The student receives primarily negative feedback from the CI;

**Here are some tips to help assure that your student feels comfortable coming to you with questions, thoughts, and concerns:**

* **Set aside time each day** for you and your student to have open communication with each other, and assure that your student is aware of when those times are scheduled.
  + ***For example***: You may schedule time at the beginning or end of each day to touch base with your student, or you may simply assure that the student has several minutes between patients to communicate with you.
* **Give the student daily feedback**—assure that you **balance constructive feedback with praise**.
* **Ask your student open-ended questions; seek their opinion**.
  + ***For example***: “How do you feel that treatment went?” “What do you think you would do differently next time?” “How much assistance do you feel you need with your caseload today?”
* **Demonstrate interest in your student’s personal and professional growth**.
* **Be sensitive to non-verbal cues you may be giving** about your interest in them.
  + ***For example***: Are you always in a hurry? Do you sit in an office with a closed door? Do you give eye contact to your student when they are speaking to you?
* **Be an active listener**.
  + Pay full attention: give eye contact, fully face the student, put aside distracting thoughts, watch for the student’s body language
  + Demonstrate that you’re listening: occasionally nod or give appropriate facial expressions, maintain an inviting posture
  + Provide feedback to the student: reflect on what was said, ask clarifying questions, summarize what you understood the student to say
  + Defer Judgment: don’t interrupt with counter-arguments, allow the student to finish a thought first before responding
  + Respond appropriately: be open and honest, but be respectful of the student’s feelings