

Responding to Visitor Emotions

Now that masking and vaccination restrictions have been lifted, visitors may experience strong emotions when visiting a care home. They may be concerned about the risks associated with removing infection prevention measures and want to know what other measures are in place to protect residents and staff.

Or, if they were unable to visit for a long time because of the restrictions, they may be upset by the noticeable changes their friend or family member has gone through since they saw them last. Situations like this can cause many different emotions, including sadness, anger, anxiety, frustration, guilt, and helplessness.

Whatever the reason, if you are talking to a visitor who is experiencing strong emotions, try these strategies to help the conversation.

Validate the emotion. By naming the emotion and normalizing it, the person is more likely to feel heard and understood.

Listen actively. Concentrate on what is being said with the intention of understanding, instead of replying.

Give time. Don't rush the conversation, even if you are busy. Rushing can make the person feel like you don't care.

Consider your body language. Maintain eye contact, an open posture, and interested expression to communicate your concern and attention.

Be empathetic. Think about how you would feel if you were in their position.

What They Say	What You Say
How could you remove masking and vaccination restrictions!? My dad has diabetes and if he gets sick, he'll probably die.	I understand why you are feeling concerned. We want your dad to be safe too and we will do everything we can to keep him that way.
I'm scared that someone is going to come in here and spread the virus to everyone.	This is a tough situation. I think we're all nervous this might happen.
I can't believe how bad he's gotten since I was here last... it's so unfair that I couldn't be here for him.	I'm sorry that you haven't been able to visit for so long. It must be scary that your grandpa's condition seems much worse now than it did the last time you were here.
My mother used to be so lively and independent. Now all she can do is sit here. How did this happen?	It must be difficult to see all the changes in your mom's health so suddenly. This would make me feel upset too.
He must have been so bored and lonely without any visitors over the last year.	I can see you're feeling sad about how you weren't able to come and visit for so long. It wasn't your fault.
You people are incompetent!	I can see why you are not happy with the situation. I am willing to do what is in my power to improve things for you. What could I do that would help?
I want to talk to your boss.	I can see you are frustrated. I will ask my supervisor to come by as soon as they can. Please realize that they are juggling many things right now.