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Sylvia is an entry-level RN with only a few months of working experience in a hospital. She lacks patience when dealing with difficult patients. And recently, she was involved in a heated argument. Amanda, who is the nursing unit manager, is uncertain of how she should approach her.

Delivering difficult news or negative feedback to an employee can be challenging. Managers often feel awkward and tend to avoid it. Other times, they share feedback in an inappropriate way, offending the employee. However, delivering negative feedback when doing it properly is essential for the employee since you're giving them the opportunity to improve their performance.

OK, so let's discuss some tips on how to give negative feedback effectively. First of all, consider the timing. Feedback should be given regularly and as soon as possible, ideally right after the event in question. Second, it's important to find a private place and talk to the employee person to person because no one wants to receive negative feedback in front of others.

Also, a super important element is manner, which is how you say something. The manager has to get their emotions under control and approach the employee in a genuine and supportive way. Anger, frustration, disappointment, or even worse, sarcasm, can turn negative feedback into criticism or judgment.

Now let's look at the content. A helpful framework includes four steps. First, state the expectations. In the case with Sylvia, Amanda should clearly state her standards and how she expects her nurses to interact with patients. Second, Amanda should describe the observation she's made about the way Sylvia interacts with patients. Ideally, she should use the most recent problematic event she observed and describe the behavior objectively without judgment.

Third, Amanda should share her assessment where she explains how this behavior can negatively impact the unit. She should be concrete and objective. For example, she could talk about one specific interaction where Sylvia caused a patient's family to leave dissatisfied and how they will be less likely to come back and more likely to file for a lawsuit.

Finally, Amanda should explain the consequences. This is where she offers actionable suggestions on what to do differently and how to improve. For Sylvia, this includes breaking the ice with patients, using active listening skills, being more courteous, and giving them her undivided attention, as well as remembering to pay attention to the patient's family.

After that, Amanda should explain what will happen if the behavior doesn't improve. When Amanda gives feedback, it's important to remember that Sylvia is also encouraged to give her side of the story. Finally, when both parties have spoken and listened to each other, Amanda should summarize the conversation and commit to a follow-up on the feedback she gave.