

SLIDE 1: For several years Professor Eli Simon has helped medical students learn to be present with themselves and others through a series of fun, interactive theater exercises that he has skillfully adapted to zoom. Before Dr. Simon gets started, I'm going to say a few words about how and why these exercises are not only fun and relaxing, but also are directly connected to patient care skills. As we mentioned, this session is part of the mindful medicine curricular thread.

SLIDE 2: When we think of being present, we think of learning to meditate and other mindfulness practices. These of course are great ways of cultivating presence and centeredness but they are not the only ways.

SLIDE 3: Some of Professor Simon's exercises have to do with just "looking," not in the way we often glance at each other but seeing deeply. Medicine today relies a lot on imaging and lab results, but these tools cannot replace what we can learn about a patient's physical AND emotional state by simply looking slowly and carefully. We all know the saying, "The eyes are windows to the soul." It sounds corny but sometimes by really "making eye contact," not just as part of some behavioral checklist, we can touch someone's soul.

SLIDE 4: Of course, you all know that listening is a critical part of the patient-doctor interaction. But how you listen matters. Sometimes in medicine we get the idea that listening is just about looking for pertinent findings, extracting them to shape into a coherent case presentation, and discarding the rest. But Professor Simon's exercises will help you listen generously, with focus and attention, to whatever is being said.

SLIDE 5: The concept of sharing space is also important. Whether you are with a patient virtually or in-person you want to consider how you are sharing the space with that person. Are you taking up more than your fair share, acting in ways that squeeze the patient into a corner (metaphorically if not literally)? On another level, how can you co-inhabit the space filled by the patient's illness, so that the patient feels you are both together facing whatever is going on.

SLIDE 6: A mindful physician learns to be comfortable with silence, and Professor Simon will help us in this area as well. Many of us are awkward without words, and tend to fill these silences with talk, often information, not all of it helpful. Sometimes words are just noise; and clearing them away allows the patient's voice to come forth.

SLIDE 7: Finally, Professor Simon helps us remember to share the conversation. In medicine, sometimes doctors dominate and use the encounter as an information transmission opportunity. Instead, by sharing the conversation through listening, through silence, you can rebalance the power dynamic between doctor and patient and create an encounter that is truly person-centered.